■ Motoring / C1

Fil-Am is Asia's fastest rising karter

■ Metro / A20

221 no-plate vehicles impounded

■ Sports / A21

Pacquiao title fight advanced

■ Lifestyle / D4

No mix reviews for banana split

Tanong ng Bayan / A20

Presidential debates: Dinadaga ba si FPJ?

NGAYONG ALAS-10 NG GABI

By popular demand, Susan to join Ronnie in sorties

Christine O. Avendaño and Carlito Pablo

"RONNIE and Swanie," the winning box-office tandem of Fernando Poe Jr., and Susan Roces, will soon make a comeback, not onscreen but in live "performances."

Roces may join her husband, standard-bearer of the opposition Koalisyon ng

BY POPULAR/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

FPJ stand on debt alarms financial markets

By Doris C. Dumlao

IF ELECTED president, actor Fernando Poe Jr. would not declare a debt moratorium but would favor extending the amortization period for the country's debts, his economic team yesterday said.

"I wish to make it clear that government

FPJ STAND/ A9

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Thursday, March 11, 2004 ★★ 54 pages / 4 sections / vol. 19 / no. 94 P18

website: www.inq7.net

'Erap also visited Polk St.'

Special prosecutor lining up witnesses on Estrada excursions

By Armand N. Nocum

SEVERAL security escorts of Joseph Estrada, along with certain people in Camp Capinpin, are willing to testify to the veracity of reports that the ousted President is living in virtual house arrest in his vacation estate in Tanay, Rizal.

Chief Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio disclosed this yesterday in a hearing conducted by the Sandiganbayan to determine whether contempt of court charges should be filed against police officials in charge of Estrada's security, including Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane.

Villa-Ignacio admitted that he and his team had been building up a case on the matter but that the INQUIRER jumped the gun on them when it reported on Sunday President Macapagal-Arroyo's confirmation and Estrada's admission that he had been staying in his rest house across from the military camp about twice a week.

According to Villa-Ignacio, there have been reports that Estrada was holding "clandestine" meetings in his rest house and was being spirited out of Camp Capinpin without the court's approval.

Villa-Ignacio quoted a source as saying that on Dec. 25, a four-vehicle convoy led by a Lexus luxury car took Estrada out of the camp and brought him to Polk Street on San Juan and into the house of his ailing mother.

The four vehicles kept distance from one another "so they would not look like a convoy," Villa-Ignacio said after the hearing.

He said that on the way to San Juan, Estrada also reportedly asked his guards to take him to his rest house.

In an interview with the INQUIRER on Monday, Estrada admitted having spent time at his rest house on Dec. 25 and during his son Jinggoy's birthday on Feb. 11.

The Sandiganbayan did not release any order for such forays outside of Estrada's detention quarters, but Estrada told the INQUIRER on Friday that he had made a request *(pakiusap)* to Chief Supt. Rolando Sacramento, director of the Police Security and Detention Office (PSDO).

"We are also checking on reports that he had clandestine meetings with a man riding

ERAP/ A8

THE COURTSHIP of voters continues for President Macapagal at the Expo Filipino inside the Clark Special Economic Zone in Angeles City where barangay officials, councilors and "tanods (security guards)" hold their regional convention on Wednesday.

Poe camp says Ping broke gentleman's agreement

By Carlito Pablo and Norman Bordadora

SEN. PANFILO Lacson was supposed to withdraw from the presidential race in early April if the disqualification petitions against Fernando Poe Jr. was dismissed and the actor's survey ratings by March were higher than the former police chief.

Rodolfo Reyes, media bureau chief of the Poe-led Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, said these were the conditions that the two opposition presidential candidates had set before the Supreme Court dismissed the petitions alleging that Poe was not a natural-born Filipino citizen and therefore not qualified to run for president.

"There was a gentleman's agreement between them," Reyes said in an interview. "If anyone wants to renege, it's up to them."

But Lacson said there was no agreement. "Ronnie Poe and I do not have any such agreement. If (Reyes) is saying that, he is lying," the senator said.

Rep. Agapito Aquino, secretary general of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, said Reyes' pronouncements were not accurate.

"I think the agreement was to meet and assess each other's capabilities in April," Aquino said. "There's no agreement as to who should back out."

Poe said Tuesday that he was hopeful that the talks scheduled for early next month between him and Lacson would push through and result in the merger of their ranks.

"We always need the support of all," Poe said.

Reyes went on record about the supposed agreement following reports that Lacson had already slammed the door on a unification of the opposition.

"Once the disqualification case is

POE CAMP/ A8

ROGER MARGALLO

GMA AS EDUCATOR: President Macapagal receives the Outstanding Alumnae Educator Award from the Assumption College Alumnae Association president Judy Roxas (center) and Marissa Banson, Class '78 rep. The other 2 awardees are Mother Ma. Carmen Reyes and Angelina P.Barrera.

SC FLIP-FLOP

Nazario feeling bad, hubby says of snafu

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Philip C. Tubeza

SANDIGANBAYAN Presiding Justice Minita Chico-Nazario feels bad that her appointment to the Supreme Court has been in limbo, her husband said yesterday.

Asked by reporters about his wife's appointment, which President Macapagal-Arroyo appears to have withdrawn, Rod Nazario said: "Well, of course she feels bad about it, although I believe she's also happy with the Sandiganbayan [post]. But of course, any lawyer's dream is to be in the Supreme Court. That's all I can say. Honestly, of course she's feeling bad."

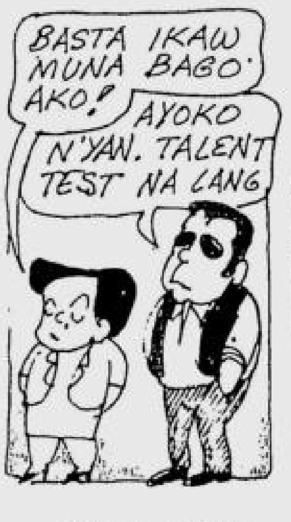
Rod Nazario said his wife had felt so bad about the apparent withdrawal of her appointment that he had to take her to Baguio last week.

Nazario, manager of International Boxing Federation Superbantamweight champion Manny Pacquiao, was in Malacañang for the turnover and presentation of the ring championship to the Filipino boxer.

Ms Macapagal witnessed the turnover by Nigel Collins, editor in chief of Ring Magazine, which is considered the bible of boxing.

But Ignacio Bunye, spokesper-

NAZARIO/ A8


BASTA IKAW MUNA BAGO AKO!
AYOKO N'YAN. TALENT TEST NA LANG

GMA, FPJ snub job interview

Blanche S. Rivera

THEY'RE at it again.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and actor Fernando Poe Jr. have not taken up the challenge of the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines for all presidential aspirants to submit to a "job interview" so the voters could judge their worthiness.

All the other candidates—former Sen. Raul Roco, evangelist Eddie

GMA/ A4

Population bomb takes back seat in May polls

WITH three children, Alona Esguerra has certainly played her part in adding to a population boom that some fear could eventually tip the country's troubled economy into crisis.

Unlike millions of other Filipino women, Esguerra had tried to do something about it when she was younger.

"It would be a sin if you don't do something to give your children a better life," said the 37-year-old company accountant, a Catholic mother of three boys aged seven to 13.

"I used to take pills when I was younger but had to stop after they had some side effects. You have to be responsible for the future of your children. It is hard today to cope with the expenses of raising them," she added.

Although many consider it as the country's single most pressing social and political problem, the rocketing population is taking a back seat to other issues in the May 10 presidential election.

With one of the highest birth rates in Asia, the Philippines will add 1.6 million to 2 million people to its ballooning population this year, raising it to 84 million, the state-run Commission on Population says.

That's 3.4 babies for every minute of 2004.

Each Filipino woman has an average of 3.4 babies in her lifetime, compared to two in Thailand and just 1.3 in Japan.

On some projections, the Philippine population is forecast to surge to more than 200 million by 2050 even as other Asian countries make progress in bringing down their birth rates.

The Commission on Population predicted last month that the country could see its population explode to 170 million in less than 30 years, a dire scenario certain to trap many more millions

POPULATION/ A5

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/11/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Kin of ferry fire victims seek faster search operations

By Leila B. Salaverria

RELATIVES of more than 100 missing passengers of the ill-fated SuperFerry 14 yesterday appealed to President Macapagal-Arroyo for help in speeding up the retrieval operations of the bodies trapped inside the half-submerged ship.

Edward Leyco, who spoke on behalf of the relatives of the missing, called for the creation of a task force to be headed by the President, whose job is to oversee the rescue operations.

According to Leyco, whose mother remains unaccounted for since the ferry fire on Feb. 27, lack of expertise and equipment is making it more difficult for members of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) to continue with the operations as the tragedy enters its 13th day today.

He said that while PCG's task was to retrieve the bodies, the bones and body parts recovered from the ship should be handled by forensic experts to identify them. Government agencies like the National Bureau of Investigation, which has forensic expertise, must join the operation.

"The bodies retrieved from the ship are already in an advanced stage of decomposition. How could we identify them?" he said in a telephone interview.

Victims, too

Retrieval operations for 102 missing passengers by PCG elements continue in the shallow waters off Mariveles, Bataan, where SuperFerry 14 was brought after it caught fire shortly after leaving Manila with 899 passengers and crew for Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro cities.

Leyco explained that if the search drags on, the jobs and families of the missing they left in the provinces would also suffer. "The relatives of the missing are now victims as well," he said.

Aside from the agony and despair that most of them were feeling, relatives were confronted with potential loss of their source of income, but Leyco said most of them were determined on finding their loved ones.

"We just want to bring home something from our missing relatives," he said. "Even just a shoe."

Leyco also scored the PCG and the SuperFerry management for allegedly not being transparent enough in updating the relatives about the operation.

Search continues

Both PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo and Gina Virtusio of the SuperFerry management, however, denied this over dzBB, saying they were doing everything to assist the families in their search for their loved ones. According to Balilo, nightly briefings are held at the PCG office for the relatives of the missing.

For the second straight day, no bodies or body parts were found yesterday by rescuers from the half-sunken ship, according to PCG Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo.

Tamayo, however, explained that salvors were working overtime to clear the debris that had accumulated on side of the ship's A-deck.

"Removing the debris is now the focus of our operations," he said, adding that he was not discounting the possibility that more bodies could still be trapped.

Philhealth, PCSO defend health plan

By Blanche S. Rivera

OFFICIALS of the state-run lottery and health insurance system said the distribution of health insurance cards bearing the likeness of President Macapagal-Arroyo could not be considered electioneering because the agencies were just implementing a program that was started long before the President ran for election.

Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office chair Ma. Livia "Honeygirl" de Leon said the PCSO has been carrying out the program to enroll indigent families in the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. health care scheme since 2002.

Philhealth president Francisco Duque said the distribution of Philhealth-GMA cards to 5 million indigent heads of families was a program that the agency started in 2001 long before the President announced that she was running.

"We do not buy votes, we buy health care. They cannot call this politicking because it is part of our mandate, and we started this program years ago," Duque said in a phone interview yesterday.

De Leon said the PCSO was merely "assisting in the implementation of the law." The agency had a "mandate to assist in the premium requirement of indigent enrollment [in the health care program]," she said.

Vote buying

De Leon and Duque were criminally charged the other day before the Commission on Elections for allegedly violating several election laws. They were accused of allegedly using P6 billion in public funds to further the President's election campaign by enrolling 5 million indigents in the Philhealth program before April 6, Ms Macapagal's birthday.

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR ALL is what President Macapagal-Arroyo, Philhealth chief Francisco Duque (center) and Livia "Honeygirl" de Leon say they have in mind with the launching of the Family Health Insurance for All program launched last month. The opposition says it's electioneering.

PDI FILE

Complainant Ramon Rana charged the two officials with vote-buying, intervention of a public officer, use of public funds for an election campaign and distribution of prohibited election propaganda.

Rana, a member of a group called PRO-CON(stitution), said the Philhealth-GMA cards prominently displayed the picture and name of the President on both sides.

Yesterday, Duque countered that it was but natural to spend government money for the enrollment of indigents in the Philhealth-GMA program.

"What do they mean we are using public funds? Of course we are using public funds. We are a government agency. Do they expect us to use private funds to finance government programs?" he said.

He pointed out that Philhealth has also distributed health cards with pictures of opposition officials who paid for the cost of the Philhealth enrollment.

Known opposition figures like vice presidential candidate Sen. Loren Legarda, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, Estrada's son and San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, and Rep. Imee Marcos, the daughter of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos are among the politicians who have had their faces printed on the health cards.

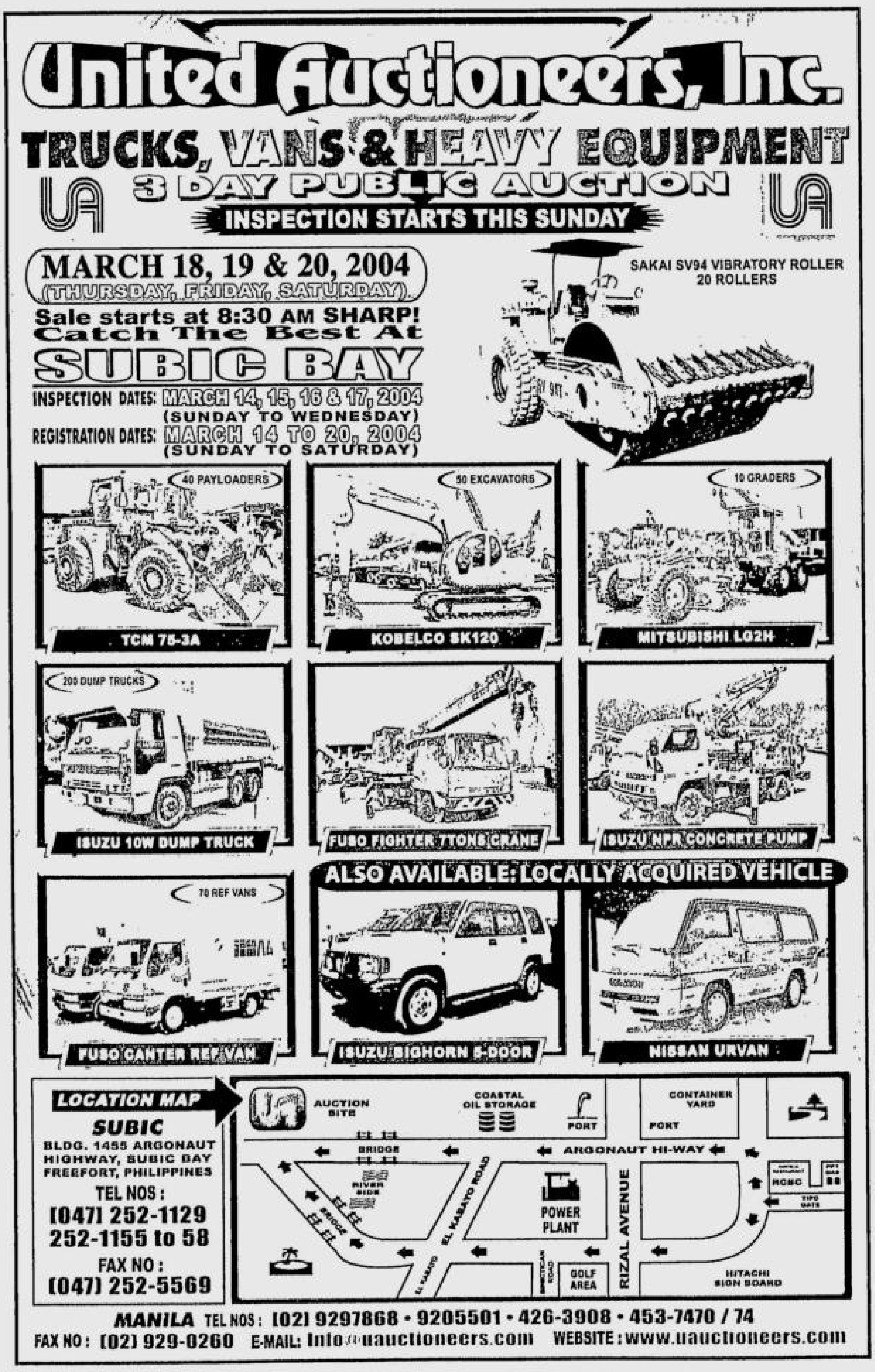
Duque called those seeking to stop the distribution of the Philhealth-GMA cards as "anti-poor, anti-elderly and anti-sick" for trying to stop a program that would benefit millions of poor and unemployed Filipinos.

He said Philhealth would not stop the distribution of the cards unless ordered by the Comelec to do so. He said the agency has yet to receive a copy of the complaint.

Duque said Ms Macapagal was the only President in 35 years to have worked for Philhealth benefits for indigents and has already enrolled 3 million families.

The President has allocated P3 billion from the PCSO to finance the enrollment of 5 million heads of families or 25 million beneficiaries within the year. This should up the Philhealth's coverage to 88 percent from less than 50 percent of the population in 2001.

Philhealth has a parallel program called Plan 500 with the initial target of enrolling 500,000 indigents in 2001. *With reports from Martin Marfil and Tina Santos*



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Undeterred, GMA doles out health insurance cards

By Gil C. Cabacungan

UNDETERRED by accusations that she was using government funds to further her election bid, President Macapagal-Arroyo went ahead distributing Philhealth insurance cards during her campaign rallies yesterday.

"We have been following the law [on the use of government funds] and I think the accused officials can defend themselves," she told reporters at the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga yesterday.

The heads of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office and the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. have been charged with violations of election laws for implementing a program to distribute Philhealth cards to 5 million families in time for the President's birthday on April 6.

The government has budgeted P3 billion for the program, with the funds coming from the PCSO and tax collections.

Expected flak

The President said she expected her rivals to claim that her acts of governance such as promoting health insurance coverage for indigents and approving benefits to members of the Government Service and Insurance System were part of her election campaign.

At the regional convention of barangay officials at the Expo Filipino yesterday, the President distributed more than 240,000 Philhealth cards to barangay captains, councilors, Sangguniang Kabataan officers and barangay tanod in Central Luzon.

Nueva Ecija Mayor Tomas Joson said the Philhealth cards that were distributed yesterday, each one bearing the image of the President holding a child, were not election-related as they were token rewards in recognition of services rendered by the recipients.

Joson said that except for the barangay tanod, who would get the cards for free, all the other recipients would pay a P50 fee for the cards.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the President would continue to push for a more extensive health insurance coverage that would focus on families, not just individuals, despite the criticism.

Anti-poor

Administration lawmakers yesterday defended the PCSO and Philhealth officials' actions, saying the holding of elections does not stop the President and her administration from doing their jobs.

Those attacking the PCSO and Philhealth "are obviously anti-poor who want a disruption in the delivery of services by dragging the agencies into their smear drive against the President," said Representatives Benasing Macarambon, Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado and Prospero Nograles.

It's goodbye to computerized polls

By Martin P. Marfil

SAY goodbye to computerized elections for now.

Yesterday, the Commission on Elections announced that it has junked its plan to use the automated counting machines, even in selected areas, for the coming elections. Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said two factors decided the issue—speculations that selective automation would be used by the Comelec to cheat for some candidates, and that it was a way of "saving" the supplier of the machines, Mega Pacific.

The 2004 elections was supposed to be the first automated elections to be held nationwide. But the plan was abandoned after the Supreme Court voided the P1.3 billion automated counting machine deal. The decision was upheld after the high court junked a motion of reconsideration filed by Mega Pacific and the Comelec.

After the decision, the Comelec floated the idea of implementing computerized voting in selected areas, but this was widely criticized by several sectors who pointed out that the Comelec could not use the machines as the Supreme Court had already voided the deal.

The decision to abandon the plan was made during an executive session yesterday at Wack Wack with all the commissioners present. Abalos said the decision was unanimous.

KIDLAT NG BAYAN

ROCO with senatorial candidates Perfecto Yasay Jr. and Frank Chavez in Misamis Oriental.
JESS YUSON

Roco tells FPJ: Deed, not words, is important

By TJ Burgonio and Michael Lim Ubac

ILIGAN CITY—Alyansa ng Pag-Asa standard bearer Raul Roco yesterday twitted opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. for the latter's statement that what matters most in a leader is the heart, not the brains, saying that deeds are more important.

"A candidate claims you must have a heart... You don't express love by mere words. You show it by deed," Roco, in apparent reference to Poe, told a briefing at the Mindanao State University in Naawan, Misamis Oriental.

On Tuesday, Poe promised a leadership that uses not only brains, but also heart. "Because without this (heart), all the rest don't matter," he said.

'Heart and love'

Unlike Poe, Roco said he has shown his "heart and love" for the country in his 14 years of government service as a congressman, senator and education secretary.

"The heart is there. Love for country is the basic proposition of the Alyansa ng Pag-asa. It's based on record, not on rhetoric," he said.

In a pep talk with MSU students, Roco took a dig at Poe, a high school dropout, by stressing the need for the youth to elect a leader who is educated.

"We need leaders who can help MSU grow. And you need leaders who are educated so that we could educate our country better," Roco said.

Roco and his ticket toured schools and public markets in Alubijid, Initao and Naawan towns in Misamis Oriental and Iligan City yesterday.

Roco also batted for the designation of a Mindanaoan to lead the peace talks between the government and the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front to end the decades-long conflict.

"We must rely on the Mindanaoan to find the solution to the search for peace. Why can't they come to terms in the peace process? Because the people from Luzon are the ones negotiating," he said.

Roco also promised an honest leadership that would provide equal opportunity and free education to all.

Free education

Roco, a former education secretary, said the only way to ensure that students finish school was for the government to implement a compulsory and free public education at the primary and secondary levels.

"A graduate in every home," said Roco, citing the failure of past administrations to address the high incidence of dropouts among students, particularly in the secondary and tertiary levels due to financial problems.

But Sen. Loren Legarda, Poe's running mate, said the focus should be on "free" college education.

A group of foundations which banded themselves to form the Coalition for Better Education disclosed that of those who enter elementary, only seven out of 10 make it to high school, just five will finish school, and only one will obtain a bachelor's degree.

The coalition led by Aboitiz Group Foundation Inc. wants at least eight of 10 pupils to reach high school with at least three finishing college through an integrated approach that will provide better education for all.

For college students, Roco wants to implement the 'Study Now, Pay Later' program, but not under the Executive Department.

Top bets told: Make your own decisions

KEEP a few advisers and make your own decisions.

This is on top of Vice President Teofisto Guingona's advice/wish list for the next president. "The buck stops with the leader of a nation and no one else, he told reporters, quoting the late US President Harry Truman.

A good president must be able to listen to all sides of an issue because at the end of the day, no matter how good the advisers are, he or she must decide as it is the leader who is accountable to the people," Guingona said, following a forum where he was the keynote speaker.

The vice president said sincerity and political will should also be major traits of the next president, adding that he or she "must exercise political will in making difficult decisions needed to institute needed reforms."

At the same time, he dared the presidential candidates to bare their stand on vital issues such as national patrimony, corruption and crime prevention, and economic recovery among others. *Jerome Aning*

Rebs, troops clash in Cavinti

COMMUNIST guerrillas attacked government troops in Laguna yesterday, a day after troops killed eight rebels in a raid, the military said.

The renewed fighting broke out after troops raided a hinterland area where the guerrillas were meeting Tuesday. Eight guerrillas and one policeman were killed.

Lt. Gen. Alfonso Dagudag said about 15 New People's Army rebels attacked a detachment of pro-government militia in Cavinti town, Laguna before dawn Wednesday. Cavinti is the town where President Macapagal-Arroyo launched her campaign for the presidency last month.

Dagudag said there were no casualties on the government side, while the rebels withdrew with "an undetermined number of casualties," he said.

Separately, soldiers in the southern Philippines reported discovering four abandoned NPA camps.

Army spokesman Lt. Col. Joselito Kakilala said the camps—capable of accommodating up to 100 people each in bunkers—had been abandoned because of military operations in the area.

The guerrillas, considered the most serious threat to the country's security, have been fighting for a Marxist state for 35 years. They've recently stepped up fighting nationwide with nearly 100 attacks in the last two months despite a resumption of peace talks. *AP*

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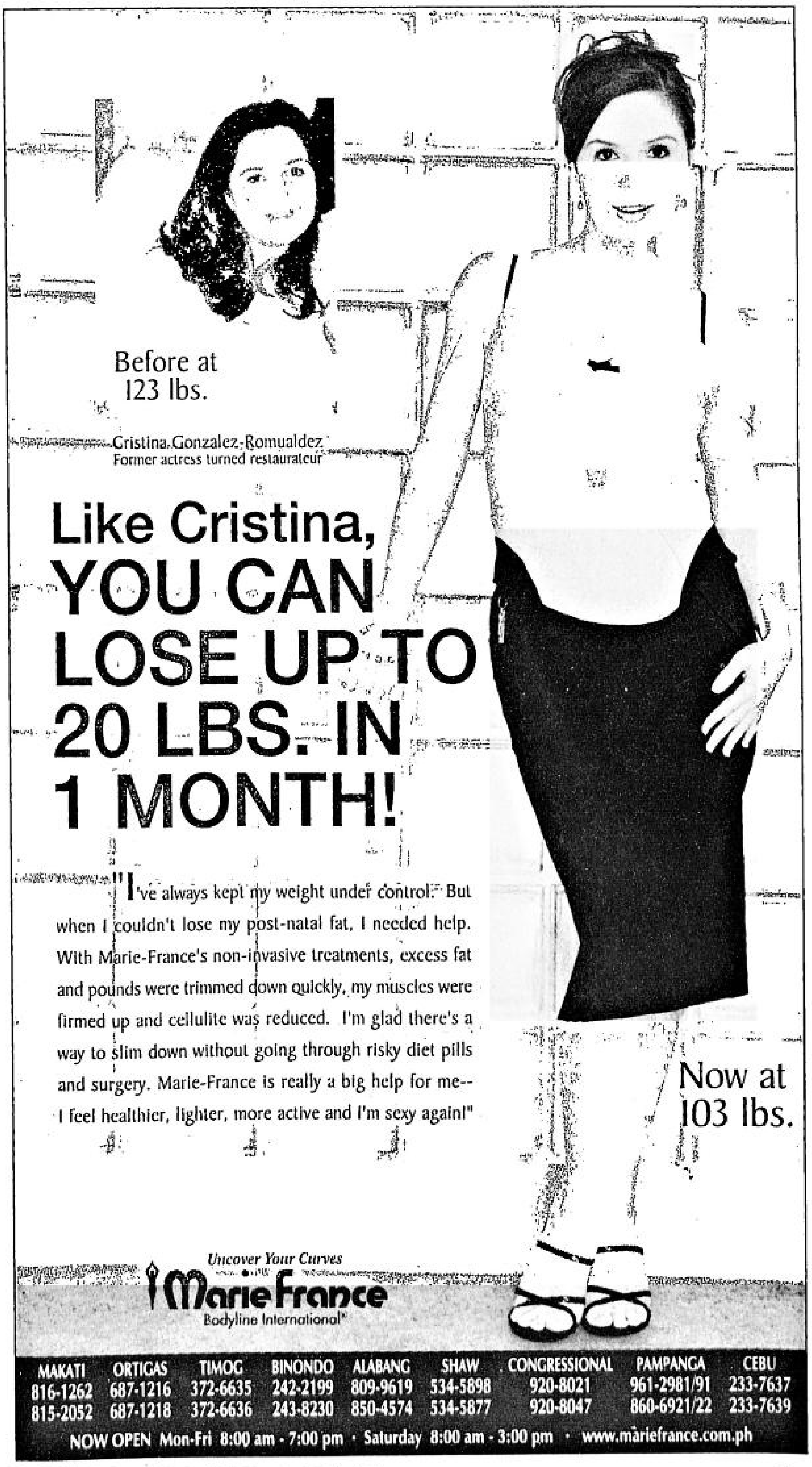
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By popular demand, Susan to join Ronnie in sorties

JUST like in the movies, the FPJ-Susan love team will hit the campaign trail in the provinces.

From page A1

Nagkakaisang Pilipino, in immediately forthcoming provincial campaign sorties, according to Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Poe's personal campaign manager.

Asked whether this was because Poe was eclipsing his teammates, Sotto said it was just to make sure that the KNP senatorial candidates got "more exposure." This strategy would be most helpful for those in the slate who are "new in politics," he explained.

In some instances, to cover more ground, husband and wife would go solo, Sotto said.

The couple would also appear in KNP campaign calendars.

Sotto said the decision to bring Roces along was the result of people everywhere asking Poe about her. "They are looking for her; we will indulge them," the senator said in a phone interview yesterday.

He said Roces might go with the party next week to Panay island, since she hails from neighboring Negros Occidental province.

On her own, Roces has been campaigning with the help of FPJ's supporters, Sotto said. She has done market tours, and has also visited towns just outside Manila. Yesterday, he said, the actress was in Bulacan where she guested in a gathering, but she drove by nearby Marilao and Meycauayan towns to campaign for the whole party.

Sotto said the KNP executive committee was looking at a plan for the couple to occasionally campaign together in major towns while the rest of the ticket, led by Sen. Loren Legarda, Poe's running mate, focused on smaller stops.

But Sotto clarified that these were still proposals up for discussion last night during the KNP executive committee's meeting with Poe.

New strategy

The new strategy for the senatorial candidates could also be a maneuver in the face of survey ratings showing them trailing administration candidates.

While Poe is running neck-and-neck with President Macapagal-Arroyo, some members of his senatorial slate are being left behind, said KNP media bureau chief Rodolfo Reyes.

In fact, Reyes said, the opposition will launch in mid-March a "Samahang Walang Iwanan" alliance to encourage "block voting." That is, those voting for Poe must vote for the entire KNP national ticket, from vice president to senators.

Reyes said the opposition would be stressing the importance of "tandem leadership," meaning the president and vice president must come from the same party.

He said the new alliance would impress upon people the need to elect candidates who will support Poe's agenda.

"It is an FPJ-Loren alliance for good government," Reyes said.

Loren not spare tire

Legarda said earlier she would not be a mere spare tire as Poe's vice president.

During campaign sorties, Poe always reminds audiences that they should give their support to Legarda as well: "*Mapipilayan ako kung wala si Loren* (I will be handicapped without Loren)."

Reyes noted that based on mainstream survey results, the KNP candidates may win only six of the 12 Senate seats being contested.

The KNP camp recently questioned the credibility of poll survey results.

Legarda has claimed that the KNP's internal surveys show that she and Poe are both leading, even as surveys done by two of the country's leading polling firms indicate that she is way behind administration vice-presidential candidate Sen. Noli de Castro.

GMA, FPJ snub job interview

From page A1

Villanueva, former police chief Panfilo Lacson and even businessman Eddie Gil, who is on the brink of disqualification—have signed up, PMAP president Oscar Contreras announced yesterday.

Gil is set to take the first interview on March 15, Roco and Lacson at different times on March 16, and Villanueva on March 18. Contreras said the PMAP has not received a "yes" or "no" from either Poe or Ms Macapagal.

The two have also been putting off giving their final answers to organizers of presidential debates, each waiting for the other to confirm.

Not a debate

"This is different from a debate," PMAP executive director Gerry Plana pointed out in a press conference yesterday, exactly one month after the association posed the challenge. "The job interview is a very non-threatening, very focused, very positive way of getting to know people."

The PMAP appealed once more to Poe, who is running neck-and-neck with Ms Macapagal in the latest surveys, to show to the people that he has skills and competencies that make him a suitable choice for the presidency.

Reading from a statement, Contreras said: "We, too, dislike a debate that is pure talk, Mr. Poe, or any debate that would give a candidate the third degree treatment. But the job interview aims to reveal to the voters your leadership abilities and experience, not grill you on your IQ or academic preparation."

For Ms Macapagal, the PMAP's message was: "Proven ability, not words, is the emphasis of our challenge. Take the interview and give voters a chance to consider your accomplishments in an objective manner."

Contreras said Ms Macapagal's spokespersons Ignacio Bunye and Michael Defensor earlier assured the PMAP that they would "try to convince the President." This, Contreras believed, was a "positive" indication.

Poe first

But Ed Fereira, past president of the Management Association of the Philippines and president of the Philippine Movement for Good Governance, said he heard the President verbalize a single, but stringent, condition on Tuesday night.

During the birthday party of a common friend, Fereira recounted, Ms Macapagal declared she had absolutely no problem with debates and interviews, "as long as everyone would go through them as well."

It was quite clear, Fereira said, that she first wanted to know Poe's position.

The actor, who recently presented his platform of government and 100-day agenda, has consistently evaded all prospects of confronting his rivals.

If they don't hear from the two top contenders until March 22, PMAP officials said, "they would be judged based on the paper profiling being done by (our) researchers."

Evaluation

The association has assured the participants that the job interview would be "a frank but friendly conversation" with Federico Macaranas, dean of the Asian Institute of Management; Imee Centeno, vice president of United Laboratories; and Grace Abella-Zata, managing director of Corporate Executive Search, who is also the head of the PMAP presidential profiling committee.

Each candidate will be allotted an hour to answer around 10 questions. The interview will be recorded on video. After evaluation by a team of experts, the video will be presented to employees of PMAP member corporations and student groups.

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Population bomb takes back seat in May polls

From page A1

of Filipinos in poverty.

An estimated 40 percent of Filipinos now live below the poverty line, which government officials define as an income of P50 a day. Only 13 percent of Thais live below such a poverty line.

"Our population growth is getting out of control. There is going to be an explosion. We are approaching a breaking point," warned Fred Magbanua, a Protestant pastor of the Jesus Is Lord Movement.

Neglected issue

Ironically, President Macapagal-Arroyo and her front-running rival, Fernando Poe Jr., are campaigning mainly on pledges to fight corruption and enforce law and order.

Like most politicians, Ms Macapagal and Poe are avoiding aggressive policies for curbing the birth rate, fearing a collision with the powerful Catholic Church, which condemns as immoral the use of contraceptive devices. About 85 percent of Filipinos are Catholic.

Fr. Fausto Gomez, dean of sacred theology at the University of Santo Tomas, defended the leading candidates' decisions to stay out of the population debate.

"It's not fair to blame the Church. There are other ways to deal with the population issue," Gomez told Reuters.

"We think the state has no business forcing people to accept certain contraceptive methods. The choice belongs to married couples to decide, not the state or some organization," he said.

Some argue that a booming population could be advantageous to the Philippines as its workers, some 7 million of whom already work overseas, will be in greater demand from countries where population growth is falling.

But most see the negatives as outweighing the positives.

Economic pressure

"Definitely, the high birth rate puts a great deal of pressure on the nation's economic growth. Whatever gains the country makes are easily negated by our ballooning population," said Sen. Juan Flavier.

"The Church is a powerful force in Philippine political life. In an election year, it is normal for candidates to make statements that are not antagonistic or will not draw violent reactions from the Church," Flavier, a medical doctor and former health secretary, told Reuters.

Tomas Osias, executive director of the Commission on Population, has called for urgent action.

"Whoever wins this election should address the population-management concern because it has a very big impact on our economic development, food security, health, education, environment, housing," Osias said.

Only Lacson, Bro. Eddie

Protestant evangelist preacher Bro. Eddie Villanueva and Sen. Panfilo Lacson are the only two of the six presidential candidates making birth control part of their platforms. Both are trailing in various surveys.

"We have come out openly advocating modern methods of family planning, but we oppose all forms of abortion," said Magbanua of Villanueva's Jesus Is Lord Movement.

Magbanua said his group and its two million eligible voters expected to get support at the poll from millions of Catholics who practice birth control with condoms and other contraceptive devices against the teachings of their Church.

Critics of the Catholic Church say rural Filipinos lack access to condoms because government officials, influenced by the Church, don't help to distribute condoms donated by other countries.

Warning to Lacson

If elected, Lacson said he would institute a family planning program anchored on a policy of two children per family.

Unless population growth is stayed, Lacson said, the population is expected to balloon to 100 million by 2010. "By then, we won't have enough to feed, clothe and shelter our people, or provide them with other basic services," he said during a campaign sortie in Cebu yesterday.

Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, however, cautioned Lacson on his proposed family planning program, saying the opposition presidential must be pro-life.

"I told him: You should be pro-life, otherwise," Vidal told reporters after his meeting with Lacson at the Cebu archbishop's residence. "He said he is pro-life. I hope he continues that attitude."

Asked if he gave Lacson his blessings, Vidal said: "Of course, we have to bless everybody."

Not anti-life

Lacson later told reporters that he was not anti-life. "I want to slow our population explosion. We'd be anti-life if we cannot feed children. It's a matter open to interpretation," he said.

"We have to find a way to control population growth without resorting to violence," he added.

Various organizations have endorsed Lacson's family planning program. Among them are the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and United Vendors Association of the Philippines. ***Reports from Reuters and Norman Bordadora***

GMA says she's a 'good, good, good President'

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Still campaigning on her "good governance" platform, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said she has been a "good, good, good President."

"The difference in this short tenure [is that] we made a strong start. In a complete term, we will make fundamental changes," she told reporters here where graced two separate gatherings on Wednesday of business and provincial political leaders in Central Luzon.

The Clark visit was not for her election campaign but for governance work, she said.

"To me it is very important that most of what I do now is about governance. I have left it to the K-4 candidates to do the large part of the campaigning," she said.

At the Global Gateways summit at the Holiday Inn here, Ms Macapagal assured businessmen they had the "continuing and ever growing concern and attention of the President, the genuine President who is genuinely from Central Luzon."

In her speech following the presentation of the Global Gateways plan to link the airports, seaports and highways of Clark in Pampanga and the Subic Bay Freeport Zone in Zambales, she said she began the project during her stint as trade undersecretary and which she continued as a senator.

"I initiated that. That's just to say how long we've been in this dream," she said.

Ms Macapagal said the Global Gateways project— the integration of the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport, the Subic container port and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac toll road—can be done.

She recalled the success of another economic corridor that she began in Iligan and Cagayan de Oro cities.

"That is one good example of how important experience is in good governance," she said.

Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima introduced Ms Macapagal as the "*tunay na pag-asa ng bayan* (the real hope of the nation)."

She said that reaching out to more Filipinos was going to be the task of her running mate Sen. Noli de Castro who would work to bring the government closer to the people and vice versa.

"You have a bridge [in Noli]," she said.

She also announced that Purisima had recommended the duty-free importation of 5,000 metric tons of pork, a still undetermined volume of soybeans and 350,000 MT of corn for hog raisers in the wake of the recent shortage of pork in the market.

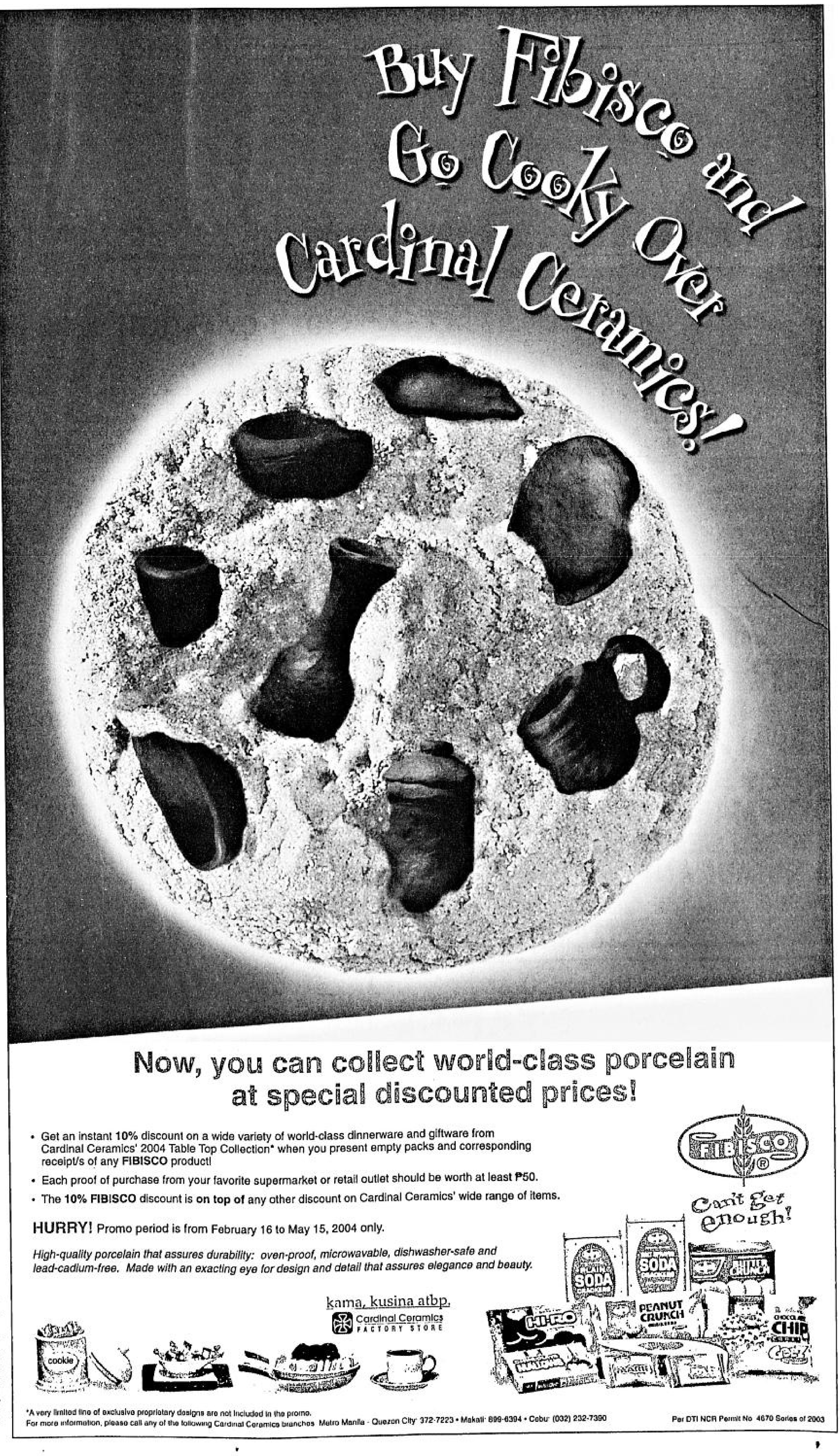
Earlier at the Expo Pilipino, where she attended a convention of some 50,000 barangay captains and councilors, barangay tanod, civilian volunteers and security guards of Central Luzon, the President stressed the important role of the participants in the campaign against crime and terrorism.

"You are important to me. You are important in my administration. And if possible, and since it is okay to campaign now, you are important in my bid in the May 2004 elections," the President said. The convention was organized by the regional peace and order council.

Despite requests from Nueva Ecija Gov. Tomas Joson III, the council chair, that the local officials stay until 3 p.m. for a series of workshops, most of the participants left the amphitheater after the President's address.

Several barangay officials denied they were given transportation and food allowances to attend the convention, the first to be organized in the region.

On Wednesday, the administration's candidates barnstormed through Pampanga's major towns and cities. The motorcade was expected to wind up in Angeles City for a major rally.



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NO BIG FISH

Ombudsman explains why only 'small fry' are charged in scam

By Armand Nocum

OFFICIALS at the Office of the Ombudsman yesterday denied reports that they only singled out "small fry" in the filing of plunder charges against 20 officials and personnel allegedly involved in the P134-million vehicle repair scam at the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Ombudsman Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said there was no evidence pointing to the involvement of retired undersecretaries Edmundo V. Mir and Mabini Pablo, and five other ranking officials in the multi-million-peso scam.

"If anybody would come out to provide us with new information linking them to the vehicle repair scam, then we are going to go after them as well," Villa-Ignacio told reporters yesterday.

Some Sandiganbayan officials expressed surprise that Mir and Pablo were not included in the plunder charge. The officials, who asked not to be named, noted that President Macapagal-Arroyo herself ordered the preventive suspension of Mir and Pablo in 2002 to ensure that there would be no whitewash of the investigation.

Also cleared were Abraham Divina Jr., bureau of equipment director; Emily M. Tanquintic, controllership, financial and management services director; Oscar Abundo, Teresita de Vera and Renan Sikat.

In dismissing the plunder and graft case against the seven officials, Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo said there was "no evidence" to "pinpoint to their participation" in the scam.

In a supplemental resolution that he filed, Marcelo also noted that the President herself had "exonerated" Mir and Pablo.

As to the case of Divina, Abundo, Tanquintic and others, Marcelo said there was "no averment in the complaint that will incriminate them" and "no evidence on record that will ascribe criminal liability against them."

Charged with the 20 DPWH officials for plunder before the Sandiganbayan last Friday were10 private citizens who were found to have made false transactions and claims in relation to the bogus repair of 521 DPWH vehicles from March to December 2001.

Named principal respondent in the case was Maximo Borje Jr., former head of the DPWH motor pool section.

Borje was estimated to have accumulated some P82,321,855.38 from "false claims and transactions."

Palace hits travel advisories

MALACAÑANG yesterday criticized the latest travel advisories issued by the United States, Great Britain and Australia warning of possible terror attacks and a rise in kidnappings, saying these were based on outdated intelligence and rumors.

The travel advisories implied that the fire aboard the Superferry 14 on Feb. 27, which left 22 dead and more than a hundred missing, could be an act of terrorism.

American, British, and Australian nationals were advised to be extra cautious when traveling to the Philippines, and to avoid southern parts of the country where Muslim separatists, terror groups and kidnapping gangs are "active."

Travel warnings were acceptable "if there is sufficient and reasonable basis" for them, Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in a statement. "It is unfortunate that (they should be) sprouting at a time when we have already crushed the threats of terrorism in this country."

Narcs ask why Lim won't take drug test

By Christian V. Esguerra

LIM: Top of the list

DOES anybody wonder why senatorial bet Alfredo Lim refuses to undergo drug test, a requirement for candidates in the May 10 elections?

A ranking official of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency yesterday maintained there was nothing wrong with candidates having themselves examined for possible drug use if only to set a good example to their constituents.

"We just want to make sure that we won't have government officials who are drug users," said PDEA deputy chief Rodolfo Caisip. "Besides, it's mandated by law."

So how come Lim, a staunch supporter of the government's effort against illegal drugs, snubbed the mandatory drug test?

He was among the 15 senatorial candidates the Commission on Elections said had yet to submit their drug test results as of Feb. 13.

The list also includes re-electionists John Osmena and Aquilino Pimentel, former San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada, and former Securities and Exchange commissioner Perfecto Yasay Jr.

Lim became known for his anti-drug efforts during his term as Manila mayor in the late 1990s.

He triggered outrage among human rights advocates when he ordered the local police to mark with screaming red paint houses of suspected drug pushers in the city.

The labels were easily offensive: "Beware, drug pushers. Get out." "Warning: House of pusher. Stay away." "Alis Dyan. Pusher. Droga."

Just last year, Lim almost revived his career in anti-illegal drugs operations when President Macapagal-Arroyo invited him to contribute in her own campaign she launched last June.

He was supposed to reunite with Sen. Robert Barbers, and former police comrades Lucio Margallo and Reynaldo Jaylo—collectively known as the "Four Aces" during their heyday at the Manila police.

But only Jaylo became officially part of the Macapagal campaign. He's now an official of PDEA.

Gov't eyes duty-free pork, corn feeds

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE GOVERNMENT plans to allow the duty-free importation of Dutch pork and corn and soybean feeds for a limited period and quantity in a bid to bring down the prices of pork in the domestic market.

In a speech at the Holiday Inn Resort at Clark Field, Pampanga, President Macapagal-Arroyo announced that the Cabinet-level Tariff and Related Matters had endorsed the duty-free importation of 10,000 metric tons of pork from the Netherlands and 350,000 metric tons of corn feeds up to end-2004, and unlimited amount of soybeans for the next six months.

At present, a duty of between 35 percent (for the special quota program) and 50 percent is slapped on port imports; 3 percent on corn feeds duty; and 30 percent on soybeans.

The President is expected to sign the Executive Order implementing the tariff incentives next week. The pork imports would be coursed through the Department of Agriculture.

Ms Macapagal said this should bring down pork prices that have shot up to as much as P160 per kilo and address the low pork supply after hog raisers cut down production due to insufficient supply of corn feeds.

Meat dealers have protested the high pork prices by recently declaring a "pig holiday.'

Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima said the initial batch of pork imports could be raised depending on the demand. This batch represents only two percent of the country's annual pork consumption of 500,000 metric tons, he said.

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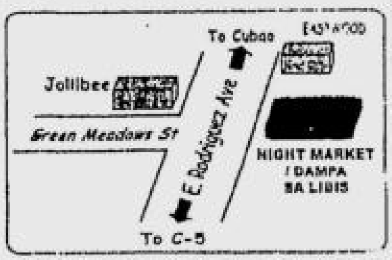

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STOP POLITICAL DYNASTY

UPHOLD JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY FOR DZNC BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN

STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

February 20, 2004
Cauayan City, Isabela

Once again, the powers that be in Cauayan City unleashed their claws against one of their most ardent critiques in local politics for the past three decades - last February 17, 2004 exactly 2 years after the first unlawful closure in 2002, DZNC **BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN** was ordered closed by the City Government of Cauayan with strict orders from the City Mayor Cesar Dy.

Despite efforts to strictly comply with all "rules of the law", **DZNC BOMBO RADYO** was shut-down twice. The city government repeatedly alleged the station of "illegally" setting-up in 1996 its broadcasting stations, management office and transmitters within an allegedly designated "prime agricultural land" contrary to claims of the DZNC management that the city government through the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB) issued a Zoning Decision classifying the property as commercial in July 1996. This was upheld in 2002 by then Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Region II Director Abrino Aydinan, confirming the "commercial" character of the property and a trial court order in 2003 dismissing the case moot and academic.

Where is JUSTICE and DEMOCRACY in the City of Cauayan?

BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN has remained through the years, steadfast to the principles of an objective, critical, militant and pro-people broadcasting. Among its hundreds of thousands of listeners in Northeastern Luzon, it served as the eyes, the ears and the mouthpiece of the masses - the ordinary peasants, vendors, drivers, church-people, the youth and students, professionals and public servants, as well. Over the years, it has become instrumental in exposing the traditional, patronage, elite, corrupt, and violent politics characterizing the government bureaucratic control particularly of the province of Isabela. Together with the highly oppressed peasants of the province, **DZNC BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN** remained resilient and fearless against the long history of tyrannical dynasty in Isabela.

BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN is a witness to the endless struggles, grievances, severe economic and political oppression among the toiling masses, a witness to the gains of the local people's movement in their continued aspirations for genuine peace, socio-economic reforms and democratic rights of majority of the Isabelinos. **BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN** opened up the opportunity for the countless unheard voices of Isabelinos to reach the airwaves and to those in power. The repeated unlawful closure of **BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN** signals the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the powers that be. The significant and increasing political isolation of the political **DYNASTY** in Isabela is rapidly escalating.

BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN has become a very effective medium in communicating with the masses. And being an icon of dedicated, straight, fearless and honest journalism, **BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN** has become a big threat to the political **DYNASTY** in the province.

The vigilance, dedication and unwavering principles of the local people's movement has kept **BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN** well grounded, therefore, the ultimate goal of the political **DYNASTY** to win the hearts and minds of the masses through **BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN** has become a remote possibility.

We, the concerned citizens of Cagayan Valley have the RIGHT to know the truth. Likewise it is the RIGHT and RESPONSIBILITY of **BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN** to bring to people the truth. Let freedom of expression, freedom of the press, our civil liberties be exercised.

LET JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY REIGN IN THE PROVINCE OF ISABELA! LET DZNC BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN GET BACK ON AIR! LET THE VOICES OF THE TOILING MASSES BE HEARD

Signed: CONCERNED CITIZENS OF CAGAYAN VALLEY

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PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Erap also visited Polk Street, prosecutor says

From page A1

a big bike and a certain Attorney Ara," Villa-Ignacio said, acknowledging that the latter had been "associated" with the Oakwood mutiny last July.

Frightened witness

Asked to identify his source or sources, Villa-Ignacio demurred, saying: "I am not at liberty yet to reveal [the name]. *Baka ma*-burn out. You released it early; it frightened the witness. He does not want to come out anymore."

"I was supposed to complete the scenario and [the reports] came out ahead and scuttled our talks," Villa-Ignacio said, referring to his negotiations with the source who supposedly volunteered information on Estrada's house arrest in December.

"Unless I'm shown a written affidavit, I am not buying it as gospel truth. I have been in this game for many, many years and I'm always very careful about volunteered information," he added.

Groundwork

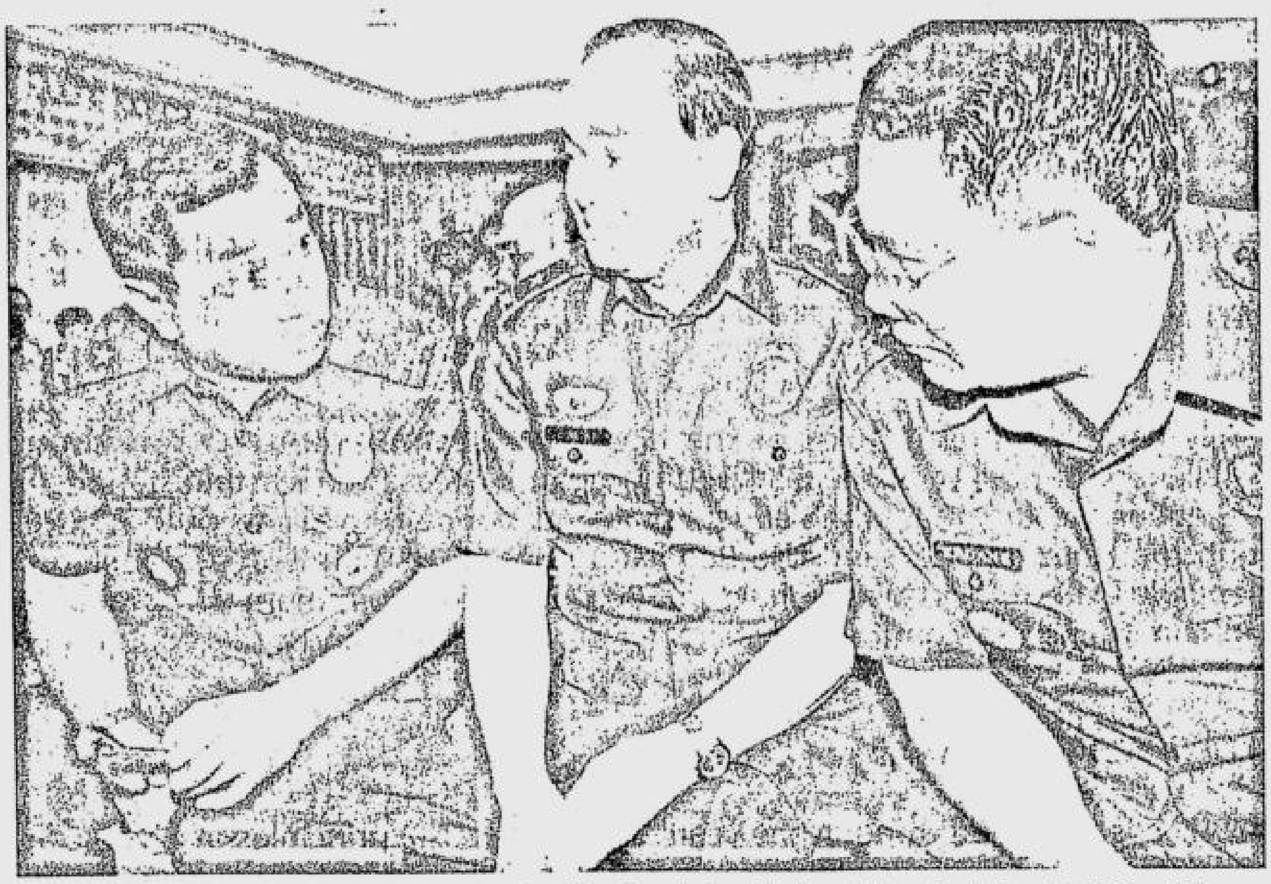
At the hearing, Villa-Ignacio received brickbats from Sandiganbayan justices, defense lawyers Jose Flaminiano and Noel Malaya, as well as the PNP legal head, chief Supt. Doroteo Reyes, for his painstaking efforts to get minute details from Sacramento about Estrada's reported stay in the rest house.

Villa-Ignacio later said that he was laying the groundwork for the testimony of any of the 56 police officials and personnel assigned to guard Estrada. He was specifically targeting the 15-man custodial unit whom Ebdane sacked on Monday.

"We would like to get the names of the 15, in fact of the entire task force, because we might present one or two of them," said Villa-Ignacio, who also asked Sacramento for a copy of the camp logbook.

He said he had been receiving feelers from some members of the task force and from "other people inside the camp," but that they were verifying the information to make sure that they were not being given a false story.

Villa-Ignacio said he had a strong case against Estrada's guards because aside from their supposed witnesses, the ex-President himself, his lawyer Raymond Fortun and Housing Secretary Michael Defensor had admitted in various interviews that they had spent time with Estrada at the rest house on at least two occasions each.



WHO authorized the mysterious movements of ex-President Estrada from his place of detention to his estate in Tanay? The Sandiganbayan holds a hearing to find out from his jailers from left, Chief Supt. Roland Sacramento, head of the Police Security and Protection Office, Doroteo Reyes, chief of the PNP legal unit, and PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane. JOAN BONDOC

"This would mean that Estrada has wandered to his rest house on six occasions," he said.

Early warning

Villa-Ignacio said he had earlier warned the government against allowing Estrada to be transferred from the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City to Camp Capinpin.

"Ever since, I have said that Camp Capinpin is only a ploy for [Estrada] to eventually go to the rest house. And I think that I am being proven right now," he said.

But when asked if he thought Malacañang was behind the alleged ploy, Villa-Ignacio said: "I don't want to make any speculations."

At the hearing, Sacramento made a "vehement" denial of reports that he had allowed Estrada to go to the rest house.

But during cross-examination, Villa-Ignacio pronounced Sacramento as "incompetent to testify" after the latter's admission that he slept in Camp Capinpin only for 11 nights since December.

"If he spent 11 nights in three months there, then he would be irrelevant as a witness," Villa-Ignacio said.

But Sacramento countered that he phoned the camp daily.

"If I [sleep at the camp often], my wife and my famuy will get angry with me," he said in a raised voice, eliciting an uproar in the packed court.

'No violation'

In Malacañang, President Macapagal's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye voiced confidence that the criminal charges filed Tuesday against her and other officials in connection with Estrada's stay in his rest house "will not hold water, as there has been no violation of law."

He said the case would give Ms Macapagal the proper venue to explain her side and to prove that the allegations were baseless.

In a radio interview, Bunye said there was nothing wrong in Ms Macapagal adopting a "policy of humane treatment" for her ousted predecessor.

"That is not outside the law," he said.

Bunye said Ms Macapagal should not be held accountable for supposed lapses in Estrada's detention because she just laid down a general statement of policy.

He thanked Estrada and opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. for their defense of the President.

Miriam says it's trivial

Ex-Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, a senatorial candidate of the administration K-4 coalition, joined those coming to Ms Macapagal's defense.

"President Arroyo is not the custodian of the accused and, therefore, she has no criminal liability. Further, as incumbent president, she enjoys immunity from suit except in private civil cases like [US] President Bill Clinton," Santiago, a lawyer and a former judge, said in a statement.

Santiago was reportedly one of those who met with Estrada in his rest house. The meeting supposedly occurred when she sought permission from him last month to join the K-4 ticket.

Santiago said the issue of Estrada's "occasional visit" to his vacation estate was a trivial matter.

"As long as there are no signs that the accused might flee the jurisdiction of the court, other details of his detention are *de minimis*, and the court should not be bothered with them," she said.

She also said the critics of Ms Macapagal and Estrada were "emotionally unstable publicity seekers who give the law a bad name."

In Manila, private prosecutor Marichu Lambino dismissed Santiago's comments.

"She is a candidate. She is running for office. And she needs to be quoted in newspapers at our expense," Lambino said.

'Publicity gimmick'

At a press conference of the K-4 candidates in San Fernando, Pampanga, Santiago was in her characteristic fiery form.

She challenged the lawyers and activists who filed the criminal complaint against Ms Macapagal et al. and said their move was a "plain publicity gimmick."

Citing the immunity of the President from criminal prosecution during her term, Santiago said: "So what is the point of announcing that President Macapagal-Arroyo will be charged when these offenses can only become effective in the judicial system in 2010?

"They're supposed to file their complaint in 2010, but why are they now resorting to publicity?"

Santiago said there was "absolutely no basis" for the complaint.

She said Estrada's "occasional" use of his rest house had "clear justification," and cited the visits of his supporters and his attending Sunday Mass.

"Are we no longer a Christian country? Are we no longer bound by considerations of humanitarianism?" she said. ***With reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana and Jerry Esplanada in Manila; Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

Nazario feeling bad, hubby says of snafu

From page A1

son for Ms Macapagal, said she had "not said anything about recalling" Justice Nazario's appointment to the Supreme Court.

"As far as we know, the situation is on hold," Bunye told reporters at a briefing when pressed as to the status of the appointment. "What the President said [was] that for the meantime, Justice Nazario will have to complete the job that she's supposed to do at the Sandiganbayan."

Justice Nazario heads the anti-graft court's special division hearing ousted President Joseph Estrada's plunder case.

Asked if the vacant slot at the Supreme Court would be reserved for Justice Nazario, Bunye said: "We have not received any new instructions."

He also said Ms Macapagal had spoken personally with Justice Nazario about her appointment.

MINITA NAZARIO cools off in Baguio.

GMA influenced by law firm

Nazario said he did not bring up his wife's hurt feelings to the President. "Maybe she does not know that I am the manager of Manny Pacquiao," he said.

Nazario said that, not being a politician, he did not meddle in "politics" and did not even discuss the appointment with his wife.

He also said he could not believe that Ms Macapagal would be influenced by a law firm into withdrawing his wife's appointment.

Ms Macapagal signed Justice Nazario's appointment on Feb. 11 but did not make it official by sending it to the Supreme Court. "The Firm," which handles the legal affairs of the First Family, is said to have blocked the appointment.

"You know, I could not understand," Rod Nazario said. "A President of the Republic, as what I read in the papers, is being controlled by some lawyers' office regarding the judiciary. That should not be [the case]."

Nazario denied that his being Pacquiao's manager was the reason behind the apparent withdrawal of his wife's appointment.

"I don't sell myself to anybody and I don't sell Pacquiao to anybody," he said. "It's up to him to choose his candidate."

Pacquiao has endorsed Ms Macapagal's candidacy.

The boxer said yesterday that his endorsement was not only for her support for him and Philippine sports: "I hope she wins so that we do not have to start anew, managing the country. I hope Ma'am makes it so that the progress of our country will continue."

Prohibition starts today

The Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) chaired by Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. yesterday decided to defer action on the vacancy in the high court because of the absence of a formal communication from Malacañang.

But before it did, among the issues that it discussed was whether it would take an order from the high court for Ms Macapagal, who is busy campaigning, to formally explain why she had not filled up the vacancy.

With the decision, the choice on who would replace retired Associate Justice Josue Bellosillo would be left to the next president.

The Constitution bars Ms Macapagal from making appointments two months before the elections until the end of her term in June. The prohibition starts today.

Defer action

Senate Majority Floor Leader Francis Pangilinan, a JBC member, said the council had decided to defer action on the matter until its meeting next Wednesday.

"That was basically what we discussed: should the JBC make the inquiry or should it first bring the matter to the Supreme Court, [for it] to ask for comment from Malacañang," he said, adding:

"We decided that we need more time because of the possible implications."

Pangilinan said the JBC discussed the possibility of first informing the Supreme Court because it was "directly affected" by the vacancy.

"We don't want to come to that situation wherein the voting in the court [with its 14 remaining justices] would result in a tie," he said.

Under the Rules of Court, the justices will have to re-discuss a petition if their votes result in a tie. If the tie is not broken, the petition is dismissed.

If the petition is an appeal on a previous ruling, a tie vote means the previous decision stands.

Silent Palace

Pangilinan said the JBC discussed Justice Nazario's appointment but, again because of the absence of communication from the Palace, did not act on the matter.

"We don't know what the status of the appointment is," he said.

Ms Macapagal had said that she expected the JBC to come up with a new list of nominees. But no formal notice had been sent to that effect.

"To submit a new list would mean that the old list was not acted upon. But we cannot assume that the old list has not been acted upon because there is no official communication," Pangilinan said.

The JBC list of nominees sent to Malacañang on Jan. 28 included Nazario, Supreme Court Administrator Presbitero Velasco Jr., Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo, Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Cancio Garcia, and University of the Philippines law professor Ruben Balane.

90-day period

Bellosillo retired on Nov. 13. Under the Constitution, the President had 90 days to fill up the vacancy.

"As far as the 90-day period is concerned, we still don't know [if it was violated] because there might already be an appointment but it has yet to be released for one reason or another," Pangilinan said.

"The ball is really in Malacañang's court now," he said. "We are interested to find out what Malacañang intends to do with the list that we submitted."

Not withdrawn appointment

Ms Macapagal herself said during a dinner at the INQUIRER last week that she had not withdrawn Justice Nazario's appointment and that there was a clamor for the latter to finish pending matters in her court.

Asked yesterday if completing the job meant that Nazario would have to finish Estrada's plunder trial, Bunye said: "She has to tackle the job for as long as needed."

By Bunye's statements, Malacañang is not worried about the deadline for the President to fill the vacancy left by Bellosillo.

"Some say [the deadline is] today, some say it's Friday. But the President has not given any further statements on this," Bunye said.

He said the high court had a "quorum" and could do without a new appointment.

Nazario: SC is every lawyer's dream

IN AN EXCLUSIVE interview with InqTV, Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Minita Chico-Nazario said she shared every lawyer's dream of making it to the Supreme Court, but respected the President's prerogative to appoint her own choices.

"Everyone in the judiciary, any lawyer, that is their ultimate ambition, to reach the highest post in the judiciary," she said in Filipino.

"But you know, she is the President. She has the discretion, the privilege, to choose kung *sino ang gusto niyang ilagay sa matataas na puwesto* (who she will appoint to high positions).

In the two-part interview aired Monday and Tuesday, Nazario waxed fatalistic.

"*Gayunpaman, nasa Panginoon na ang lahat na iyan* (Whatever happens, it's up to the Lord). If He wants to put me there, nobody can stop Him. If he thinks I should stay here, that's okay with me too. He has given me so much already."

Nazario, the first woman presiding justice of the Sandiganbayan, is possibly the first appointee in the SC's hundred-year history whose appointment was announced and then recalled before it took effect.

Poe camp says Ping broke agreement

From page A1

over and whoever is ahead of the surveys will lead the opposition," Reyes said of the agreement.

"Plus the fact that both of them agreed that six more years under President Macapagal-Arroyo is too much," Reyes said.

He said that it was only "logical" for Lacson to withdraw and allow Poe to stand as the sole standard bearer of the opposition because "I doubt if he (Lacson) can" catch up with Poe's survey ratings.

Recent survey results showed that Poe and Ms Macapagal were neck-and-neck. Former education Secretary Raul Roco and Lacson were third and fourth, respectively.

No chance

"His (Lacson's) following is not large enough compared to the following of FPJ," Reyes said."If you base it on surveys, FPJ is way ahead of Lacson."

But Lacson's spokesperson Lito Banayo said Poe had no chance of winning with Lacson running.

"They are just trying to force us to withdraw because they know that Ping Lacson is gaining support," Banayo said.

With deposed President Joseph Estrada expressing all-out support for Poe, the Iglesia ni Cristo would "also go for FPJ," Reyes said.

Tightly knit

The tightly knit INC, which is said to command from 2 million to 4 million votes among its members, supported Estrada in his landslide victory in the presidential election in 1998.

Reyes said Lacson had "nothing to lose" if he withdrew from the presidential race as he would retain his seat in the Senate for another three years.

Reyes said he was not aware of any concessions that may be given to Lacson in exchange for his withdrawal.

FPJ stand on debt alarms financial markets

From page A1

must honor its commitments to creditors, and it must not only endeavor to stretch debt maturities but also to try to bring debt levels down," Poe said in a press statement.

In a campaign booklet published Tuesday, Poe repeated his plan to "look into the possibility of restructuring our sovereign debt in the domestic and international financial markets."

But the wording left many debt analysts guessing and prompted the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to state that the Philippines would honor its debts and that any restructuring "should be carefully studied."

Not unilateral

Poe's campaign spokesperson, Rep. Francis Escudero, said the actor's proposal for debt restructuring would not be a unilateral act on the part of the government but would be done with the consent of the creditors.

"By debt restructuring, we mean stretching the amortization period for our debts, so that interest payments deferred on them can be channeled to projects that will spur economic growth, which, in turn, will improve the government's capacity to pay our debts," Escudero said.

The government must cough up P542 billion this year to service the consolidated public debt estimated at about P5.4 trillion.

"Nothing in his platform should be construed to mean that he will not respect or recognize any known obligations outstanding or otherwise by the local with local or foreign creditors," Escudero told reporters.

Sacred

He said that the portion of the foreign debt owed to holders of bonds and other IOU notes, collectively worth $16.4 billion by latest official count, would not be subjected to restructuring.

"We treat these obligations as sacred and they will all be met per the agreed schedule," Escudero said.

Philippine dollar bond spreads were stable yesterday after widening sharply on Tuesday on news of a new sovereign issue and Poe's comments about debt restructuring.

Worse timing

The Philippines, Asia's most active sovereign dollar debt issuer, is expected to sell $500 million of 11-year bonds at a yield of around 9 percent, a market source said on Wednesday.

Traders said the timing of the comments in Poe's campaign booklet could not have been worse and would make it more difficult to sell the new issue.

The BSP said extending the maturity of the country's debts could fuel economic growth but any restructuring must be done in consultation with creditors.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura, who earlier sought a clarification on Poe's stance on debt restructuring, said the (clarification) "is not bad because it is not unilateral and there's no element of repudiation. In other words, it's market-driven."

"If it's a voluntary stretching out of maturities to smoothen out the debt schedule, that's already what's being done over the last six years. When there are good opportunities to lengthen the maturities, then it's always welcome," Buenaventura said. "The best time to do it is when you don't need it."

BUENAVENTURA

Finance Undersecretary Eric Recto said the clarification somehow eased concerns over the country's willingness to shoulder debt obligations. "It dispels the concern of investors," he said.

Lock out

Former BSP Governor Gabriel Singson earlier warned against recent calls to restructure or renegotiate public debts, saying this would not avert a debt crisis but would lock out the country from the global capital markets.

Singson, who took part in the government's past debt restructuring initiatives in 1970 and 1983, expressed concern that the proposal might hamper the government's ability to borrow from the global market.

He recounted that the Philippines declared in 1983 a debt moratorium, which was followed by several waves of restructuring until it ended in the issuance of Brady-type or high-yielding bonds.

"We were not able to go back to the voluntary financial market until 1992, the last quarter, and we raised only $50 million. So from 1983 to 1992, or for almost 10 years, we were shut off from the international market," he noted.

Social services

Poe said the fiscal problem must be approached in the context of a developing economy starving for funds to propel growth.

He said any new government must sit down with creditors to arrive at a mutually beneficial solution to the country's burgeoning debt problem.

"This approach, coupled with the drive to increase tax collection and trim government expenses, without sacrificing social services expenditures, would bring us out of the debt trap," Poe said.

"We must do these because our economy cannot grow, and our government cannot be effective, if we will always set aside one-third of the national budget for interest payments."

"Debts are choking our growth. We just want some breather. Even you yourselves have tried debt restructuring for some of your companies in the past."

Priority

An economic adviser of Poe, Victor Macalincag, a former finance undersecretary, said a priority would be to bring down the budget deficit to GDP (gross domestic product) ratio through reforms particularly on the revenue side.

"We have to bring down debt levels by limiting our deficit within manageable levels in the immediate future, by improving the tax effort. We have attained a high of 19.9 percent tax effort in 1994 and now it has gone down to 13.4 percent," he said.

"We have attained a certain level. Why can't we bring it back to that level in the immediate term?" he said.

Another member of Poe's economic team, Romeo Bernardo, a finance undersecretary during the Ramos regime, said: "There will be a lot of fixing on the fiscal side because that's where the problem is. In the case of (indexation of) sin taxes, for instance, that's something that needs to be passed." *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Reuters*

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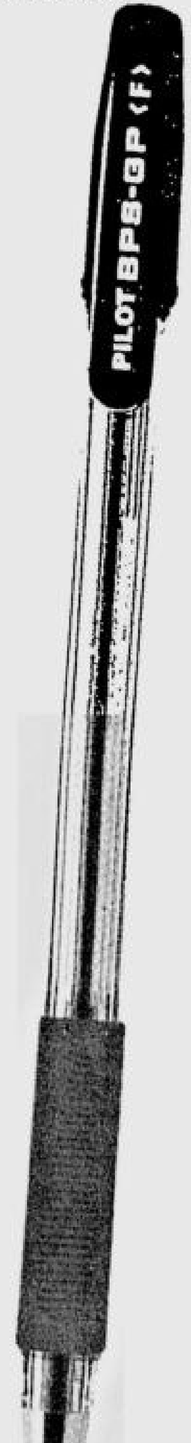

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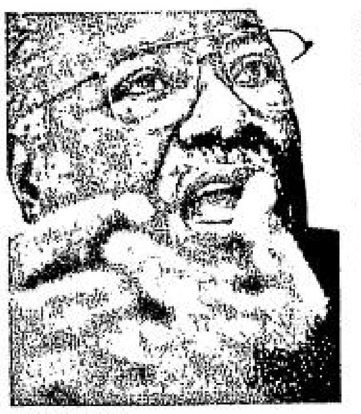
Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Ex-UN official is Haiti's new premier

PORT-AU-PRINCE—Haiti named a new prime minister on Tuesday as a step toward restoring order after a month of bloody turmoil and the United Nations appealed to the world to aid the impoverished Caribbean country.



LATORTUE

US Marines sent in when President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was driven out nine days ago reported killing a civilian and Haitian police shot three suspected looters—bloody reminders of simmering violence in a country awash with guns.

With the 2,300-strong US-led international force on patrol, a council of "wise men" made up of prominent Haitians picked former Foreign Minister Gerard Latortue as prime minister until elections can be held.

Latortue, a native of the northwest port city of Gonaives and a former senior official of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, replaces Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, who was appointed by Aristide.

"They are looking for an independent man. I am an independent man," Latortue said by telephone from Florida, where he has been living and working as a business consultant and hosting a television talk show.

UN resident coordinator Adama Guindo issued an urgent appeal for $35 million in funds to feed and care for 3 million of Haiti's 8 million people for six months. "The situation in Haiti is one of chronic crisis," Guindo said.

Shortly before he spoke, Haitian police killed one man and injured two others near a Port-au-Prince industrial area that was looted in the days after Aristide's departure on Feb. 29.

Marines who saw the incident said the victims were pushing a soda vehicle.

On Monday Marines night fired on a car speeding toward a road block and killed the driver, said Master Sgt. Jose Ruiz of US Southern Command in Miami. A second man was wounded and handed over to police, he said.

"The Marines fired in self defense," Ruiz said.

It was the second time since their deployment that US forces have used deadly force. The international force, also including French gendarmes and Canadian and Chilean troops, faced continuing angry protests on Tuesday.

At a roadblock made of smoldering tires, garbage and an overturned car chassis near the airport, 500 Aristide supporters gestured at Marines and passing French military vehicles, urging them to "go, go, go."

"We want our president back," said Junior Louis, a 21-year-old clad in an oversized basketball shirt and shorts. *Reuters*

Putin completes Cabinet reshuffle

MOSCOW—President Vladimir Putin put the finishing touches Tuesday on a Cabinet reshuffle that surprised the nation ahead of presidential elections, replacing conservative Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov but keeping prominent economic liberals and most other key figures.

He also whittled down the bloated top layer of government by combining some ministries' portfolios and reducing the number of deputy premiers to one.

The announcement completes a process that began two weeks ago when Putin dismissed Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov and his Cabinet.

The most significant Cabinet change announced Tuesday was Ivanov's replacement by Sergey Lavrov, Moscow's longtime UN ambassador. Ivanov, a holdover from Boris Yeltsin's presidency, had been criticized in some quarters for his comparatively hardline stance on the West and for offering excessive support to Saddam Hussein and other leaders who were considered international pariahs.

Lavrov's appointment "is a confirmation of the pro-Western attitudes of Putin and of his intention to continue this course," said analyst Andrei Kortunov of the Eurasia Foundation.

Lavrov, 53, a career diplomat who had served as Russia's ambassador to the United Nations since 1994, has been popular among his colleagues and is seen as taking a middle-of-the-road approach.

Putin on Tuesday reappointed key members of the former Cabinet, including Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin and Economics Minister German Gref, who have been key figures in steering Russia's course out of the economic collapse of the late 1990s.

Sergei Ivanov was reappointed as defense minister, as was the well-regarded Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu. Putin also formalized the appointment of Rashid Nurgaliyev, who had been acting interior minister since Boris Gryzlov stepped down to lead the pro-Putin United Russia parliamentary faction. *AP*

Thai PM replaces 3 top ministers

BANGKOK—Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra replaced three top ministers on Wednesday after a string of recent setbacks, including the bird flu epidemic and a surge of violence in the largely Muslim south.

With a general election due in less than a year, the still popular Thaksin replaced his defense and interior ministers, both criticized for their handling of unrest in the south, where at least 40 people have been killed in the past two months.

Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak returned to the finance ministry 13 months after being succeeded by his number two. Analysts said significant policy changes were unlikely.

Defense Minister Thamarak Isarangura and Interior Minister Wan Muhamad Noor Matha were shifted to less active deputy prime minister jobs and replaced by other members of Thaksin's Cabinet, the government said in a statement.

Science and Technology Minister Chetta Thanajaro, a former army chief who is expected to favor a more subtle, conciliatory approach to the trouble-plagued, Muslim-dominated region, was named defense minister.

Bhokin Bhalakual, a former deputy prime minister and prominent lawyer, became interior minister.

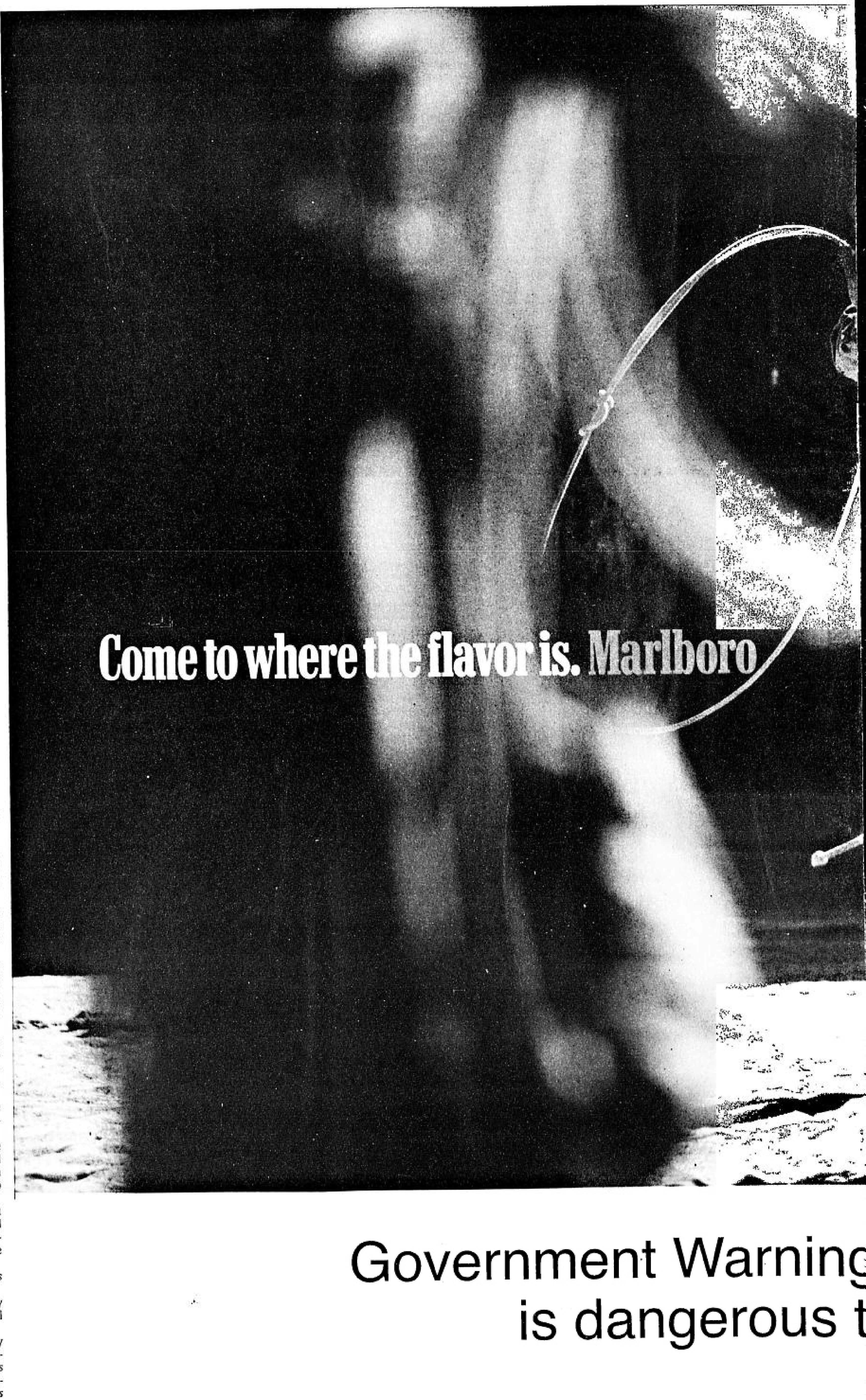
The appointments won a cautious welcome from Muslim leaders in the south who said policy-makers had failed to come up with even a decent diagnosis of the problems so far, let alone a solution.

"When one doctor cannot give the right treatment, you need another doctor. We will have to see how the new one treats the patients," said Waedueramae Maminchi of the Islamic Council of Pattani Province.

Analysts and editorials called the changes insignificant.

The Nation newspaper, writing before they became official, likened the shifts to musical chairs and "old wine in a new bottle."

Thaksin was known to have been unhappy with the government's response to growing security problems in the mostly Buddhist country's southernmost provinces that started in early January with an attack on an army base. *Reuters*



Government Warnin
is dangerous t

Bashir involved in terrorism, says top US security official

JAKARTA—A top US security official Wednesday expressed dismay that Abu Bakar Bashir is to be freed early from an Indonesian prison next month, saying Washington is convinced that the militant Muslim cleric had "intense and deep" involvement in terror attacks.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, who is on a tour of Asia, said he was disappointed with the Indonesian Supreme Court's decision Tuesday to halve Bashir's three-year prison sentence on forgery and immigration charges.

Bashir, a strident proponent of Islamic militancy in the world's most populous Muslim nation, is due to be released April 4 after spending 18 months behind bars.

The Islamic preacher has long been suspected of having links with al-Qaida and of heading Southeast Asia's Jemaah Islamiyah extremist group. But he has never been charged with terror activities blamed on JI, such as the October 2002 Bali bombing, which killed 202 people—mostly foreign vacationers.

Bashir has consistently denied being a terror chief. However, several of his followers have been convicted and some sentenced to death for the Bali blasts, the worst since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

Speaking to reporters in Jakarta, Ridge said he hoped Bashir could "be brought to justice in a different way" in the future. He did not elaborate.

The United States believes Bashir had an "intense and deep involvement in the planning and execution of terrorist activities," Ridge said at a news conference with Indonesia's Security Minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

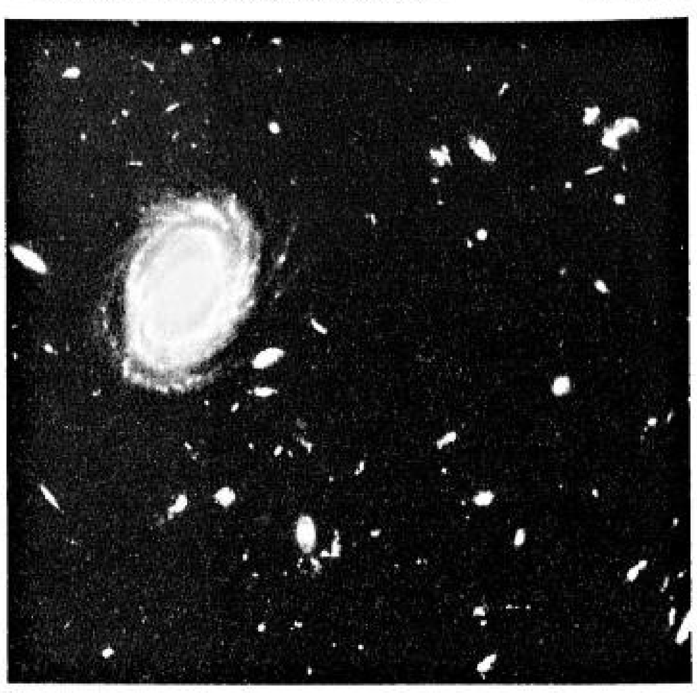
Ridge said: "Indonesia continues to be a key partner in the war against terrorism. The US government and citizens will assist Indonesia in all possible ways."

Despite this, Yudhoyono announced that the Indonesian government "respected" the court's decision to free Bashir.

Bashir, who runs an Islamic boarding school on the main island of Java, was detained shortly after the Bali bombings on accusations that he was the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, which has also been blamed for a suicide attack on the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta last year.

Bashir was brought to trial in 2003 but was never directly charged in either terror attack despite pressure from Washington and other Western nations as well as neighboring Australia.

Some anti-terrorism experts say Indonesian prosecutors had difficulty establishing a case against Bashir in part because Washington denied police access to two Indonesian terror suspects being held in US custody. *AP*



HUBBLE Space Telescope snaps the deepest portrait of the visible universe ever achieved. The image required 800 exposures taken over the course of 400 Hubble orbits around Earth. The total amount of exposure time was 11.3 days, taken between Sept. 24, 2003 and Jan. 16, 2004. REUTERS

Hubble unveils universe's image at its infancy

BALTIMORE—Scientists unveiled a monster baby picture of the universe on Tuesday, in an image snapped by the Hubble Space Telescope that looks deep into the cosmos, back 13 billion years to just 700 million years after the Big Bang.

Hubble has looked back in time before, but this image, known as the Ultra Deep Field, is the most profound vision the orbiting telescope has ever captured, scientists said at a briefing at the Space Telescope Science Institute.

The new picture looks like a scattering of jewels on black velvet, but it is in fact some 10,000 galaxies crammed into a section of sky about one-tenth the size of the full moon.

The image peers only 300 million miles deeper into the ancient universe than similar Hubble images made in the 1990s, but this extra distance sees back to when the very first infant galaxies were forming, a time of great interest to astronomers because it marks a transition point from a cosmic dark age.

"This is the deepest view of the visible ever taken," said Rodger Thompson, one of a team of astronomers who put the image together with two of Hubble's sophisticated instruments. "It's an amazing time to be an astrophysicist."

Thompson and other scientists emphasized the importance of looking at the earliest times of galactic development, which can be more dramatic and sweeping than the evolution of galaxies as they age.

"It doesn't seem like much... but when you realize that this is a time when a phase transition occurred in the universe... this is a very critical time, you want to have details on that critical time," Hubble astronomer Mario Livio said in an interview. *Reuters*

Convicted sniper gets death penalty

MANASSAS, Virginia — Sniper mastermind John Allen Muhammad was sentenced to death by a judge who called the Washington-area shootings that left 10 people dead "so vile that they were almost beyond comprehension."

Muhammad denied any involvement in the October 2002 rampage, echoing a claim of innocence he made in his opening statement to the jury when he briefly served as his own attorney.

"Just like I said at the beginning, I had nothing to do with this, and I'll say again, I had nothing to do with this," Muhammad said. He told the judge he plans to appeal, and urged, "Don't make a fool of the Constitution of the United States of America."

Muhammad's teenage accomplice, Lee Boyd Malvo, is to be sentenced Wednesday to life in prison after a jury spared him the death penalty.

A jury recommended a death sentence for Muhammad last year, but Circuit Court Judge LeRoy F. Millette Jr. had the option to reduce it to life in prison without parole. Millette said the evidence of Muhammad's guilt was "overwhelming."

"These offenses are so vile that they were almost beyond comprehension," Millette said Tuesday.

Muhammad appeared in an orange jail jumpsuit with a slightly graying, unkempt beard, in sharp contrast to his clean-shaven, well-dressed appearance at trial.

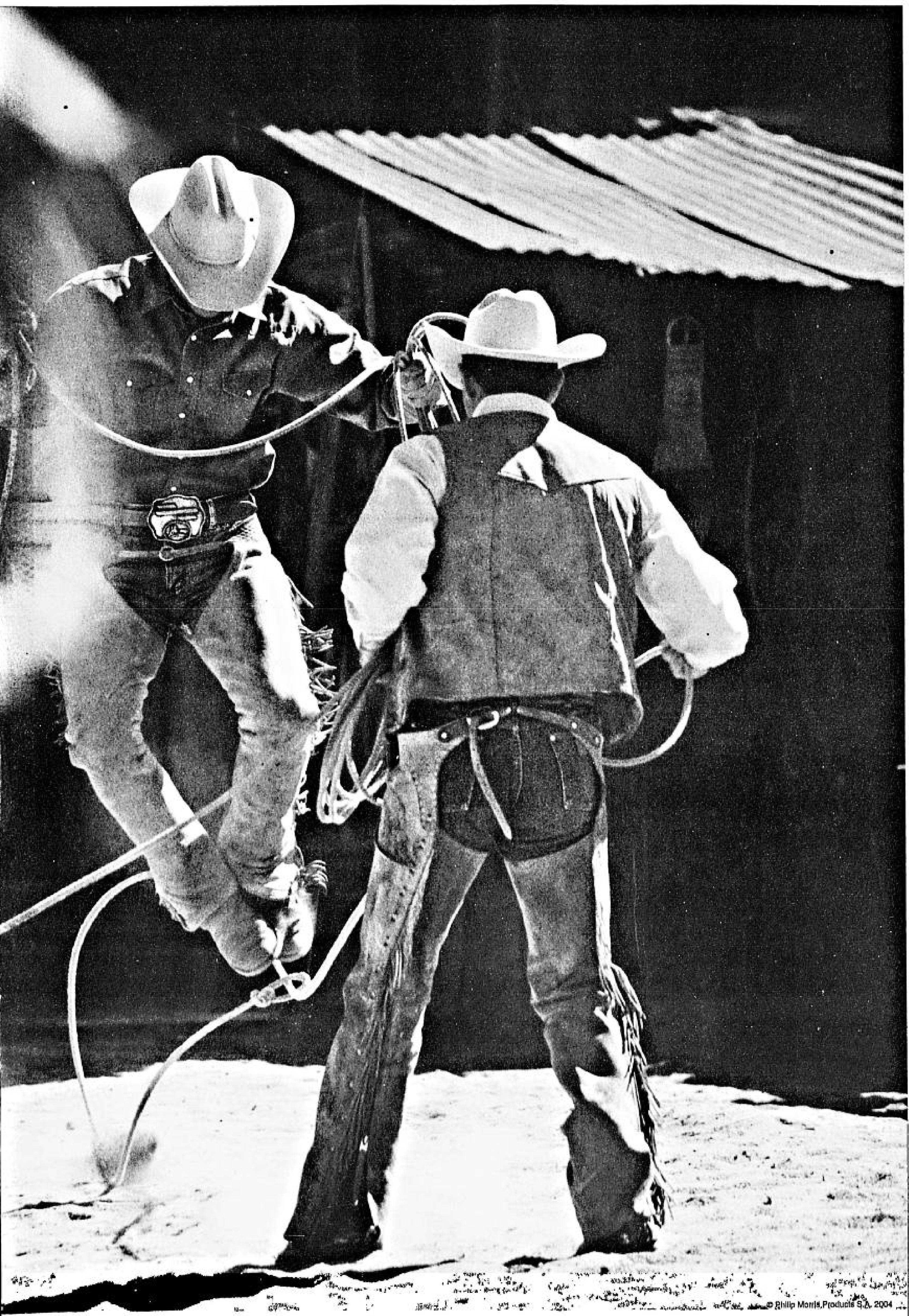
About 50 family members of sniper victims were in the courtroom. One silently shook his fist as Millette announced the sentence.

"Justice has been served today," said Sonia Wills, mother of sniper victim Conrad Johnson, who would have been 37 this Sunday. "I can go to my son's grave and wish him a happy birthday."

The sister of Hong Im Ballenger, allegedly killed by Muhammad and Malvo in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in the weeks before the D.C. attacks, said Muhammad deserved to die.

"He killed so many innocent people," said a tearful Kwang Im Szuszka. "My nephew is 12 years old and he needs his mommy... It breaks my heart."

Muhammad, 43, was convicted of capital murder on Nov. 17 for the Oct. 9, 2002 murder of Dean Harold Meyers at a gas station near Manassas. *AP*



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EDITORIALS

Ignorance

THAT the proposal increasing penalties for men who beat their wives and children was enacted into law only after more than a decade of legislative work speaks volumes of the state of awareness of the condition of women in this country. But the enactment should be occasion for appreciation nonetheless. (Better late than later, as they say, no matter that the Philippines has already seen a woman president and the incumbent happens to be the second such leader. Which is to say that it has, or should have, enjoyed a sterling advantage in that aspect.)

Before the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act took effect, men who inflicted abuse on their spouses or offspring were liable only for a six-year prison term under the crime of inflicting injury on another person; now the punishment is a maximum of 16 years behind bars. This is of course assuming that the batterer gets past responsible authorities who, with a wink and a smirk, pronounce domestic violence as mere "*away mag-asawa*" or marital tiff and is arrested and haled to court, and assuming that the judicial system works. (Regarding the last assumption, the recent landmark ruling of the Supreme Court on the case of Marivic Genosa has triggered the highest hopes. Now this battered wife who killed her husband and was subsequently convicted of parricide knows freedom in more ways than one.)

But in fact it is not only responsible authorities who look cavalierly on violence inflicted on women particularly in the home, whether in a squatters' hovel or in a suburban mansion. In many cases, the next of kin of women thus victimized tend to take a dismissive attitude, looking the other way as though physical and verbal abuse were par for the course. Even the women themselves—particularly those financially and emotionally dependent on their spouses or partners—behave as though the violence were something they had willfully brought on in word or deed and, therefore, should accept.

But this sorry state of affairs in this country that prides itself in a semblance of literacy stems from a deep-seated ignorance. (Perversity is quite another matter.) It is to the credit of women's groups such as the Kalakasan Foundation that efforts at educating both men and women on the fundamental issues of gender, power and male-female relationships are continuing. Their work is not in the least easy, involving as it does a subversion of the existing order that insists on putting women in their "place": second-class citizens, dispensable goods, punching bags.

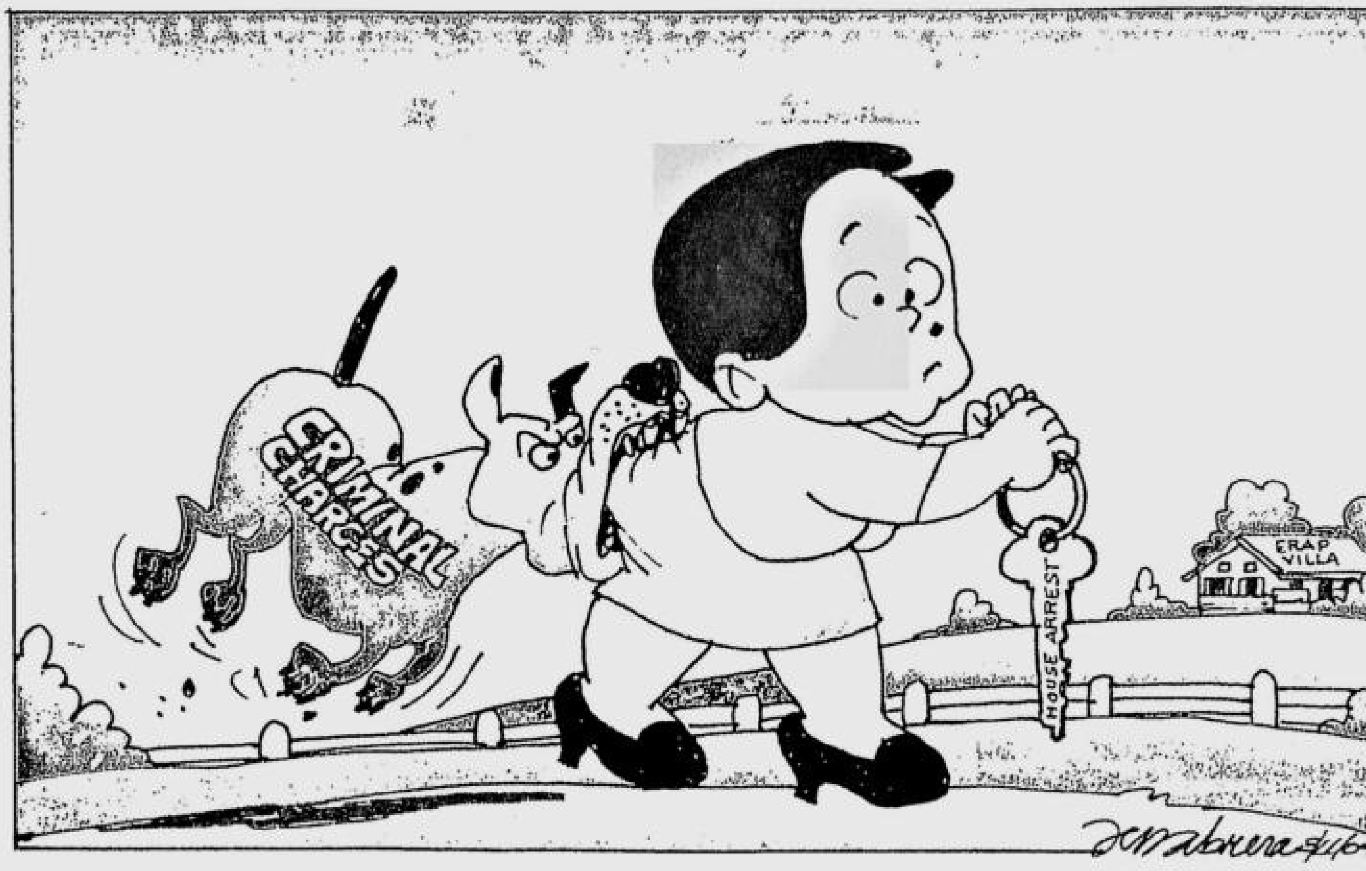
And to think that countless women are in fact subversive of the existing order in that they have taken on the breadwinner role traditionally and proudly reserved for men. This is commonplace in impoverished communities where mothers, apart from tending their young, are invariably washerwomen or fish vendors all at the same time. Or workers in the fields, as much beasts of burden as the four-legged kind. Or if not that, indentured servants in some faraway land, keeping house and rearing children for others while their own grow up strangers beyond their embrace.

Indictment

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo signed the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act into law on International Women's Day—a gesture presumably designed to set off the appropriate symbolism. But she is an intelligent woman, and the irony set off by the fact that Gabriela and other women's groups chose that day to hold mass actions protesting her "anti-woman" policies could not have been lost on her. (This is, of course, granting that she is not indifferent to such things).

The protesting groups raised the unjust, indeed "inhuman," conditions under which women work in factories in industry zones nationwide, the continuing labor export policy that is not backed by sufficient protection for workers, and the general absence of basic services for women all over the country.

That these problems are staples of protest actions should not mitigate their crushing impact on the body politic, particularly on the wives and mothers who, wise men like to say, hold up half of the sky. That they continue to plague society at large, and to an even more intense degree, should be sufficient indictment of the woman on top, the one who likes to call herself the "mother of the nation."



'Peanuts' and campaign melodies

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"YOU'RE a fool," former Evening News desk editor Carmen Hernandez-Villanueva snapped. We informed her that the wife and I gave up our "green cards."

To break out from martial law, we joined the United Nations. And two decades of postings abroad resulted in US residence. But after people power, we opted to return and signed INS form I-407: "Abandonment of Lawful Permanent Residence Status."

"Many are incorrigibly corrupt," the now-California-based columnist added with newsroom bluntness. "You want to return to that?"

That's the "fundamental question today," INQUIRER columnist Conrado de Quiros observes. "Why should anybody want to stay?" Medical board topnotcher Elmer Jacinto is leaving for the United States—as a nurse. He "encapsulates perfectly" this issue, De Quiros adds.

That sinking feeling resurfaced when Eduardo Cojuangco's predatory "Brat Pack" impeached Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide. The shady accused the unblemished. This is perversion. Was the lady editor right?

That blue funk reappeared when candidate Fernando Poe Jr. crooned Frank Sinatra's signature song "My Way," instead of explaining his programs, if any. He chanted a mantra on being qualified since he was "sincere." This is a cop-out. "Why should anybody want to stay?"

Remember the comic-strip "Peanuts"? A depressed Charlie Brown stands atop a pitcher's mound. Visitors creamed his baseball team. He wails to his beagle Snoopy: "We were so sincere."

If the poverty-strapped Filipino is "to have a chance for a decent life... fundamental change must occur soon" in nine critical areas, the Economist Intelligence Unit notes.

The nine are: political structures, population, shoddy schools, corruption, dilapidated infrastructure, jobs, judicial reforms and security.

Countries that addressed problems forthrightly left us biting their dust. Head for head, Thais became three times richer than Filipinos, and Chinese seven times—although Beijing feeds 1.3 billion people on less arable land. Now, Vietnam breathes down our necks.

Peanut-style campaigning insulates FPJ from explaining how he'd untangle these Gordian knots. He just reaches for the next song. Will that be Imelda's signature tune, "Dahil Sa Iyo"?

Some don't wait to find out. Daily 3,568 take off or ship out. And 19 out of every 100 would go for good, Pulse Asia surveys found. Those decisions affirm belief in what Martin Luther King said: "Nothing is more dangerous in the world than sincere ignorance."

The Peanut campaign signals FPJ won't join a presidential debate. He desires to engage in democratic give-and-take. But he has nothing to give except old movie one-liners and "sincere ignorance."

In the 1980s, people power swept the Philippines, Poland, Thailand, Ecuador, Mali and other countries. Ferdinand Marcos, Thanom and dictators fled. The Berlin Wall collapsed. So did the Soviet Union. Some 140 countries moved into free elections and broader civil liberties.

But "this 'third wave of democratization' seems to have stalled," says Deepening Democracy In A Fragmented World. Hope curdled into despair as fledging democracies failed to deliver on pledges, the United Nations Development Programme publication notes.

Some lapsed into dictatorship, like the Congo. "Many stalled between democracy and authoritarianism. Others do not seem to be in transition into anything."

Here, seven abortive coups shot to ribbons the frail beginnings of economic recovery that People Power I started. And the plotters resurfaced in "Edsa III" and Oakwood.

They're the same people power discards who snuggle up to "Da King": Enrile, Tatad, Maceda, Jinggoy, Sotto, Honasan, Angara, Aquino-Oreta et al.

"*Tiap-tiap sin suba dakua' aun buaya niya,*" Tausugs say. There's a crocodile in every big river.

Can a sincere babe-in-the-woods, hemmed in by predators, ram through fundamental reforms? people ask. "Why should anybody want to stay?"

Democracy demands creating structures, policies and an environment where "core values allow poor people to gain power through participation while protecting them from arbitrary, unaccountable actions in their lives."

That is relevant to a country where the richest 20 percent consume 53 centavos out of every peso; the poorest 20 make do with five. TB incidence here is 219 for every 100,000. It is 26 for Thais.

"It's wrong-headed to ask whether a country is fit for democracy," Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen writes. "Rather, it has to become fit through democracy."

Ordinary citizens meanwhile share of themselves with the poor daily. Eggie Duran Apostol, for example, works at improving schools. NGOs work from greening to election safeguards. Teacher Josette Biyo brings science to life for students in ways that make international peers sit up. Thousands serve quietly as firemen, policemen, teachers. A Cebuana doctor ministers, as a Medical Mission nun, to the poorest Muslims in Tawi-Tawi.

Was it John who wrote of a self-effacing woman who poured nard on the Master's feet? "Its fragrance filled the house."

Such citizens uplift spirits—until you flick on the TV. "Da King" and his crocodiles explode on the screen. Unbidden, the editor friend's words resound: "You want to return to that?"

* * *

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Fundamentals

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I SAW my favorite economist and bishop, Sixto Roxas and Julio Labayen, last week at Club Filipino. They are part of a group that's looking at solutions to the problems of this country beyond the elections. They are not particularly gripped by the elections. None of the candidates, they say, is addressing the country's real problems. Not even Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo whose vaunted doctorate in economics is either little in evidence or gets in the way of development. Roxas should know, he served her father in the early 1960s as economic adviser.

Roxas has a model for a community-based development, rigorously conceived and prescribing the steps to accomplish it. It is the only kind of development there is, he says. The other kind, the entrepreneur-based one which subsumes everything to the reckoning of the individual capitalist, is not development—except for the companies that profit immensely from it often at the equally immense expense of the community—it is despoliation. You know there's something wrong, he says, when the GNP is deemed to increase each time a community gets devastated by a storm or an earthquake because of the sudden frenetic activity in the area, characterized by the flow of goods and emergency employment. A loss in real life becomes a gain on paper.

Enough of this business of luring foreign investments and restoring (foreign) investor confidence, Roxas would say after the presentation. No country in history has yet developed through foreign investments, not anywhere, not in the past, not in the present. All the developed countries today have developed from native ingenuity and boldness, not from the kindness of strangers. Foreign investments do not blaze trails, they go only to places that have already been blazed, that show a track record for success. Foreign investments merely supplement, like vitamins, they do not sustain, like food.

But the crucial difference in Roxas' model, as Bishop Labayen pointed out in his reaction, is not just that it redefines development from the perspective of the community rather than the investors, it redefines development as the handiwork of people rather than of capital. It sees the people as the makers of development. It transforms them from mere labor, to be hired as needed, to entrepreneurs, to create as is their birthright. It makes entrepreneurship a collective rather than an individual initiative, one that benefits the community in general in wellbeing rather than the investor in particular in profit. It transforms people from targets, beneficiaries and objects of development to subjects, initiators and authors of development. Targets of development do not develop, authors of development do.

It's a good reminder of the **real** fundamentals, the ones that are never found in the mythical "fundamentals" that business likes to bandy about when talking about progress. The real fundamentals are that countries do not develop from the benevolence or enlightened greed of others but from pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. The real fundamentals are that individual investors do not create development, a community does. The real fundamentals are that a country's greatest wealth does not lie in its land, or capital, or natural resources, it lies in its people.

Though the last is often quoted (truly the devil himself may quote Scripture to suit his purposes), it is seldom, if ever, practiced. It is more honored in the breach than in the fulfillment. Certainly, the elections overlook it completely: the battle cry among the candidates is restoring investor confidence, not restoring the people's confidence. Yet this country's fundamental problem, as shown dramatically by Elmer Jacinto, is the opposite. There and then you see why people are leaving this country the way they do. Why stay in a country that doesn't believe in you, that doesn't appreciate you, that doesn't even see you? Targets of development do not stay in their country, authors of development do.

The elections merely reflect our overriding obsession with foreign investments, export enclaves and globalization as the source of our salvation. I've always been amazed each time I hear English prescribed as the national language, or at least as the medium of instruction in schools, because that is presumably the only way we can communicate with tourists, multinational executives and potential employers abroad. It distorts the whole concept of language altogether. A language is not something a people need to communicate with others, it is something they need to communicate with themselves. It is what government needs to communicate to its constituents, it is what the citizens need to communicate to their leaders. There and then, too, you see why this country is unable to unite. We are preoccupied with learning how to talk to others, we do not care to learn how to talk to ourselves.

The wisdom of a community-based and people-centered development is not unproven. That was what allowed the activists and revolutionaries of the 1960s and 1970s to organize the grass roots and unleash their creative energies. The so-called liberated areas were far from being no-man's land that Marcos' troopers could not enter, these were areas where the masses produced and created and governed themselves. Until their leaders stopped being revolutionary and started claiming, like religious clergy, they alone could infallibly interpret the people's will, punishing disbelievers with physical excommunication in the "killing fields." Which sapped the creativity, initiative and entrepreneurship of the governed.

The beginning and the end of development is one thing only: the people. You can't get any more fundamental than that.

Nervous over FPJ's 'restructuring'

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE MAGNITUDE of the vehicle repairs scam at the Department of Public Works and Highways uncovered during the time of Secretary Simeon Datumanong, estimated to be about P134 million but probably much bigger, could only have happened with widespread collusion and over a long period of time. Reports indicate that the costs of repairs were so big, partly because they were either nonexistent, exorbitant or repetitive. If the amounts paid were instead used to buy brand-new cars, the DPWH would have gotten one car every other day! Reports said there were 700 reimbursements made by the DPWH motor pool chief during that period, worth P375,000 daily. That alone should have raised alarm bells had there been no collusion among officials and employees.

We all hope investigations will show not just the culpability of those involved but also how they happened, so that scams like this could be prevented in the future. And definitely, the guilty personnel ought to be punished.

* * *

During her visit to the INQUIRER, President Macapagal-Arroyo disclosed that Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura had been adjudged "one of the two best central bank governors in the world now." But now Buenaventura is nervous, after presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. said in a rally organized by his KNP at the University of Philippines campus in Diliman recently that if elected president, he would ask the country's foreign creditors to "restructure" the foreign debt amounting to $42 billion. The BSP chief said that FPJ should clarify what he meant exactly as this could make foreign creditors anxious. Did FPJ mean by "restructuring" a rollback to ease up on payments, or repudiating our foreign debt altogether? To the credit of FPJ's camp, his economic advisers appear trying to answer the issue of his non-utterance, but the problem is that as a result of the cramming they're forcing him to do, every time he opens his mouth to explain, *lalong lumalabo*. At the bottom of the issue is the lack of trust in his capacity to digest them.

* * *

Is GMA using those PhilHealth cards she's handing out to people as a way to get votes? Yes, say her opponents, as the cards bear her picture and she's liberally dispensing them. No, say her defenders, as she has espoused health insurance since she was vice president. Sources note, however, that while there are now some seven million families covered by this health insurance, the administration intends to add some five million more families in the next few weeks. Each card entitles a family to coverage amounting to P39,000 in case of sickness or hospitalization.

* * *

Weeks back I wrote that the Career Executive Service Officers (Ceso) system is on trial in the case filed last Oct. 20, 2003 before the Office of the President (refiled on Dec. 3, 2003 with amendments) by Undersecretary Jose M. Español Jr., Ceso 1, against Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas and Civil Service Administrator Karina Constantino-David. Español, a UP graduate, had complained that after his assignment to the OP, where he was tasked with developing a micro-economic program for overseas Filipino investors, he was summarily replaced without cause, and the program, which was pilot-tested in Tokyo in time for GMA's state visit in December 2002 and won a lot of recognition, was repealed. Worse, Español said he suffered diminution of rank, position and salary, and suspension of all benefits and allowances, all of which are protected by Ceso circulars. He argued that the career service ought to provide the stability and strength needed to insulate government and the bureaucracy from partisan political upheavals and ensure continuity of its policies and programs.

* * *

Assistant Labor Secretary Ma. Anthonette Allones wrote to clarify that as per Department of Labor and Employment's Human Resource Development Service records, Español was placed in the Ceso resource pool at his own request, effective May 31, 2002. Thus, pursuant to existing guidelines on the Ceso pool, payment of his salaries, benefits and allowances were made by the DOLE only for the first three months, but thereafter these had to be shouldered by the pool fund. Following Civil Service rules and regulations, he was also dropped from the DOLE's rolls on Sept. 28, 2002.

Español counters that his request to voluntarily join the Ceso pool was "overtaken" by the President's order of July 31, 2003 detailing him to the OP, and that both Sto. Tomas and David are aware of this detail. He also said that authority to hire and fire is vested in the President "and no agency has the prerogative to drop any Ceso from the rolls, especially without cause." He stressed that Ceso Pool guidelines are clear: "Detail is only temporary and should not result in any diminution of rank, salary or position. It is also not a ground for termination of a Ceso's right to security of tenure."

* * *

I think the Español case ought to be quickly resolved as it could demoralize the Cesos. If the President is serious about the shift to the parliamentary form of government, she doubtless realizes that what will shield it from political vicissitudes, as leaders rise and fall on the issue of no-confidence, is the formation of a strong cadre of career, non-politicized bureaucrats who will carry on the day-to-day work of government. This core of career executives became the saving grace of France through the various republics that came in succession in the tumultuous 1950s and 1960s.

Issues ought to be defined. For those interested in sharing their thoughts on this issue with Español, he listed down his website: http//www.ortigascenter.biz/pro-ceso and his e-mail addresses: pro-ceso@ortigascenter.biz or pro-ceso@mytext-mail.com.

'Kinse anyos'

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

NAKATIKIM ka na ba ng kinse anyos? Have you tasted a 15-year-old?

Whoever crafted, produced and approved that ad for Destileria Limtuaco's Napoleon Brandy cannot come clean and feign ignorance of the question's double entendre. What's in a question? Plenty.

The huge, unsightly and offensive Napoleon Brandy billboards asking that question have been taken down (or so we think), but the bad taste remains. Now the brandy manufacturer is questioning the Ad Board's authority to call for the bad ad's removal from the face of the earth. But that is another story.

The bad story is: why that ad, for whom that ad? It was meant to titillate, to arouse the yearning for the 15-year-old liquid. And while at it, might as well intensify the thirst for two-legged 15-year-olds. Or it could be the other way around. Think of 15-year-old waifs, think Napoleon Brandy.

So the question suggests: If you have not tasted a *kinse anyos*, go taste one. Or if you have, and liked it, go and have more. The ad shows a bottle, which is easy to get from a convenience store. But where would one get the one which is not shown, the one which is not in a bottle?

The recent outcry over the gigantic billboards that now dominate the Philippine landscape has not been addressed. Or has it? Have you seen iron structures that hold billboards being dismantled? In fact, there are more of them now waiting to be draped. It seems anyone who has a patch of earth or a rooftop can now offer his property to the billboard industry for extra income.

The issue was about unsightliness and defacing the horizon. Add danger because these iron structures get toppled by typhoons. Now comes bad taste bordering on arousal of lust for children.

Before this outcry against Napoleon Brandy, there was this huge billboard near the foot of the Nagtahan Bridge that was just as offensive, if not even more offensive. I saw it every time I came from the INQUIRER in Makati and headed for home via Nagtahan and España. It showed a young girl, about 15 or 16 perhaps, in a reclining position and with her legs sufficiently spread out. She had these big, pleading eyes looking up, and she had the fly of her jeans unzipped and wide open to show her skimpy panty and most of her pubic area. Lee™, it said. They sell jeans this way?

It was there for many months until Christmas and I kept wondering whether Manila Mayor and Pro-lifer Lito Atienza ever saw it or whether the President did, every time she came from Malacañang and was headed north. It was so huge you couldn't miss it if you were driving.

Billboards used to be made of galvanized iron sheets that were hand painted. Now billboards are made of plastic canvas that come out of giant printer machines. I once saw a team of workers preparing to hoist up a billboard ad. The canvas practically covered a whole street.

This reminded me of the artist (I think his name is spelled Kristo) who covered entire buildings and structures with canvas and then had them photographed. He certainly altered and mummified entire landscapes even if only for the duration of his outdoor exhibition. In the process, he was making a statement while whole cities watched in awe and puzzlement.

Our advertising and billboard industries leave nothing for the imagination.

Speaking of *kinse anyos*, years ago I had to do a magazine story on a study done by psychiatrists on 6- to 14-year-old street children who had been sexually used and abused. What were the children's perceptions of their experiences?

I dug up the old article and found it still applicable in today's context where lusting for children is part of the macho torture culture as evidenced by dead little girls found rotting in sacks or with bashed skulls and mutilated genitalia. Drugs often have something to do with these heinous crimes. And most likely, alcohol too. And bad advertising.

The so-called children of the streets (where, may I stress, all these deadly billboard ads could be seen) have a language all their own. Their vocabulary and conversations are not quite like what one heard if one grew up chasing dragonflies with well-scrubbed kids who smelled of soap in the morning.

"*Malaki kasi laging nilalaro*, (They're big because they were always being fondled)" said a little girl of her friend, a fellow 10-year-old, whose breasts were bigger than what pre-teeners had. The declaration sounded almost too casual. These were little girls exchanging notes on adult things.

"*Malaki kasi*..." was not foul language, it was one mean declaration that one knew "what it's all about." Like being forced to drink urine or being beaten up during sexual play, or learning new words describing what it's all about. Like "*dyug-dyug*."

In the study, the psychiatrists classified the children's reaction to the sexual abuse. Some children were able to make an integration of the event, meaning they had overcome the anxiety, they neither avoided nor encouraged discussion but were able to talk about the experience fairly objectively.

Others avoided the topic, sealing off their anxiety either consciously or unconsciously. They denied the happening and avoided discussion. There was depression and self-destruction. Some children suffered continuous repetitions of these symptoms. Still others identified with their exploiters by impersonating them, a way for them to deal with their anxiety.

It is all very complex. Go to a shelter for sexually abused children and you'd get some idea where the culture of lust and abuse is coming from.

Consumers should scrutinize their brands. By their ads you shall know them.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Deprived of liberty

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THE OTHER day, Inquirer TV asked my opinion concerning the apparent laxity of the officials in charge of former President Estrada's detention. The question was who would gain from allowing the former president to spend the day in his Tanay rest house.

My view was that no one gained, because a move that would otherwise be approved of by a sizeable number has ended up marred by the apparent lack of proper authorization. The administration looks bad for trying to coddle Estrada, and Estrada looks bad by accepting favors from his jailers. The Sandiganbayan looks impotent, and the police look all too susceptible to Estrada's charms (which seems to be the real case: the jailers got charmed by their prisoner). Instead of this all being part of a grand conspiracy, I have the feeling this is another of those comedy of errors that ends up putting the government in disrepute, because it shows how things happen with no one really ending up being in charge.

The newspapers generally tend to refer to "disgraced former President Estrada" in news reports. Eventually when a more balanced account of our recent turbulent times is written, I'm convinced it will become clear that the disgrace of Estrada, which was profound, regardless of what his apologists say, ended on the day he was arrested. In a matter of hours, he was transformed from a president who had the cunning not to grant his opponents a letter of resignation, but who lacked the courage to mount a last stand in the Palace (which represents legitimacy: he who abandons the Palace abandons power forever, a concrete manifestation of the saying that possession is nine-tenths of the law), and was turned, instead, into a political prisoner.

At the time the Estrada presidency was ending with a whimper, I wrote that what gave his opponents the critical mass that had eluded them despite their opposition to him from Day One of his administration was that one of his fellow crooks ended up blowing the whistle, finally providing the evidence needed to bring him down. The street gang nature of both Estrada and his cronies was revealed in their allegedly trying to rub out Chavit Singson. You do not kick a man when he is down: Estrada and friends forgot that rule, and they tried to kick Chavit to death, and so Chavit struck back. Had Atong Ang, or Estrada, allowed Chavit to slink away from the inner circle, consoled with a racket or two, Estrada might still be president today.

The citizenry might have been content to write off Estrada as yet another president enjoying the tribute that regularly lines the pockets of officials, but the meanness shown to Chavit rapidly became an example of a clumsy mean streak.

If it was meanness that drove Chavit into the arms of the opposition, it was the meanness of Estrada's allies in the Senate that drove the people into the streets. Enough people, anyway, to drive Estrada to throw in the towel.

Make no mistake, Estrada did throw in the towel; for what mattered was not the numbers gathered at the Edsa Shrine (and in Cebu, and Baguio, and Davao: in 2001 as in 1986, people power was not merely a Metro Manila phenomenon), but the damning lack of numbers when it came to his supporters. The disgrace of Estrada could be measured by those who didn't bother to lift a finger when their former idol was in dire straits.

Clever people couldn't save Estrada from disgrace, but they managed to arm him with the means to ensure a political comeback, by advising him not to sign a proper letter of resignation and instead, hand out a vaguely worded statement to the public and the press. His opponents, fearful of the Left which was agitating to march on the Palace and possibly do to Estrada what the Italians did to Mussolini, denied the beleaguered president a face-saving exit and installed a new government, giving the Estrada loyalists the consolation of arguing that presidents who run away can restore their presidency another day.

Civil society then did Estrada three more favors: it rallied in front of the Supreme Court to pressure it to recognize the new government; it allowed Chavit Singson to go scot free; and it demanded that the former president be thrown in a common jail. I was against throwing Estrada in jail prior to conviction from the start, to the horror of many people I know. My view is simple: It is not the manner of detention that matters, it is what detention itself represents. Depriving someone of liberty is the worst punishment there is. The prisoner in a gilded cage is still a prisoner; the former head of state under house arrest is still under arrest.

The former head of state who is confined to his home remains a disgraced former leader; the former head of state thrown in jail, when even more notorious leaders clever enough to have good lawyers and who put their money in foreign, and not local banks, are not even detained at all, becomes a political prisoner.

When I went to talk to people gathered at the Edsa Shrine during "Edsa Tres," my previous position was validated by what the people there told me. They were there because you do not kick a man when he is down. That was their logic, and it was the same logic that had deprived Estrada of popular support in the first place, when he was doing the kicking. It was the logic that rehabilitated Estrada and replaced his being disgraced with his becoming, once more, an icon of a citizenry's disaffection.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

First-time voter

YOUNG BLOOD

Luis Reginaldo Medilo

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I AM excited about the coming May 2004 elections. I am looking forward to the day when I will finally be able to exercise my right of suffrage and select the best candidates to perform the functions and duties of our country's top officials. Like other first-time voters, I am happy that I can say to myself that I am no longer one of the silent minority whose voice is stifled and whose opinions do not contribute to forming the will of the people. I am truly excited to harness the new-found power to elect the highest officials of the land, although I am filled with apprehension over the frightful responsibilities that my new right entails.

Rather than shirk the enormous responsibilities that are placed upon me, I am hell-bent on doing whatever it takes to make my vote count. I will not waste it on the wrong choices. This is the first time I will vote in an election, not counting the Sangguniang Kabataan polls. I am afraid that I may not be able to exercise my right to vote again in the future, so I plan to make good use of this opportunity. Who knows, this could be my last?

I was already qualified to vote during the latest electoral exercise in 2001, but I had no interest in politics during that time, and I failed to beat the deadline for the registration of new voters. I remembered lining up in a long queue that snaked to the small Comelec office along with hundreds of deadline-beaters. I remembered being one of the many frustrated would-be new voters who felt robbed of their unalienable rights. But I was not yet desperate, not even when I knew I missed out on the "blessings" that appear only during the elections. I knew it was my own fault.

But regrets? I have no regrets, and I am not one to dwell on my regrets. What I missed during the last elections was nothing compared to what I gained for having "accidentally" failed to vote. It was a blessing in disguise. For one thing, I gained a new insight into the intricate workings of the messy Philippine political system. Before, I really didn't care about who sat in Malacañang. I was as disinterested in politics as I was about getting married.

The historic Edsa II revolution opened my eyes to the evils attacking our nation, and from that time onwards, I started reading and analyzing news and opinion pieces dealing with government and politics as if my life depended on it.

Another reason I never regretted my failure to vote is the very same reason our country is infamous for being one of the most corrupt nations in the world. It is the very same reason millions of destitute Filipinos are living a hand-to-mouth existence and poverty is stamped on every working man's paycheck.

We are notorious for having perfected the craft of corruption and vote-buying. The politician who doles out gifts of cash to his loyal constituents refuses to call it vote-buying, saying he is just rewarding them for being such good and loyal supporters. Whatever name he calls it (in my place, it is called "*uwan-uwan*," a Cebuano term for rain), it is still a form of vote-buying in a way that it is a payment for a voter's continued patronage especially come election time. If it is not vote-buying, then what is it?

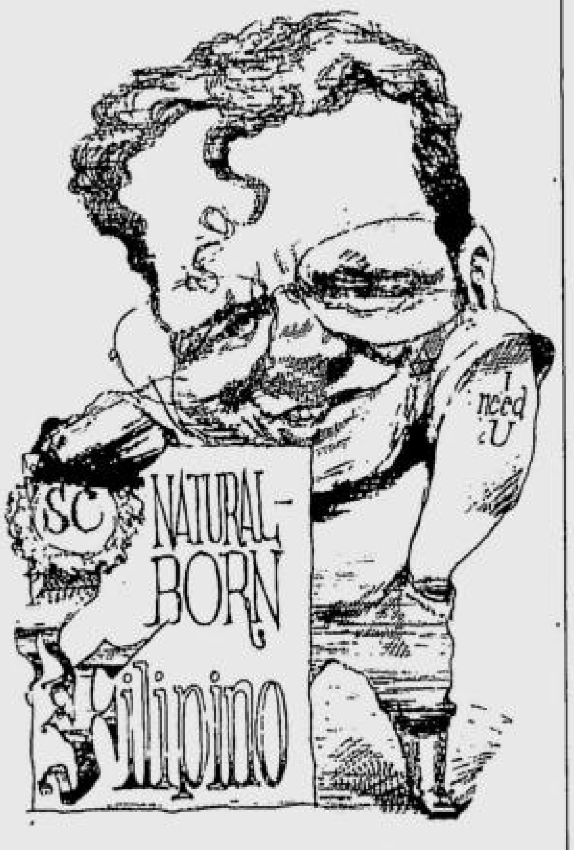
The folks I share the same roof with berated me for my failure to register on time and cast my vote. They said I have missed a once-in-three-years opportunity to cash in on the election craze. My mother, on the other hand, gently scolded me for not doing my obligation as a good Filipino citizen, and then reminded me of the money that slipped out of my hands.

Maybe what my mother said was some kind of a joke, but I have accepted the grim reality that such practices are commonplace in a country where voting in elections is no longer looked upon as a sacred obligation to be fulfilled by every patriotic, freedom-loving and law-abiding citizen, but as a political exercise that is part of the commerce of man and subject to the manipulations of the wealthy and powerful. No longer do we troop to the polling precincts filled with a sense of duty and with all nationalistic fervor burning, we numbly trudge to the polls filled with a sense of shame for being unwitting pawns in the corrupt and dirty game of politics. We have little regard for the sanctity of the ballot and have little respect for the whole election process, just as we have lost respect for the leaders we voted into office.

My non-participation in the 2001 elections was indeed a blessing in disguise. The dirty world of politics is one place I am glad, for now, not to have entered yet. I don't need experience to vote wisely in the coming elections. All I need to be a wise voter is to vote without fear and not to be unduly influenced by sheer popularity or name recall. I am hoping that when the day of reckoning comes, I will be able to fulfill my duty as a Filipino, and in the process, do a great service to my countrymen.

Luis Reginaldo Medilo, 23, is a third-year Electronics and Communications Engineering student at the University of Bohol.

IN THE NEWS



Fernando Poe Jr.

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to jsarmiento@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

ELECTION 2004

Popularize issues for the *masa*

IN LINE with the INQUIRER's citizen-based coverage of the national elections, we came up on Feb. 15 with a list of economic, political and social concerns that presidential aspirants and other candidates for national office must address.

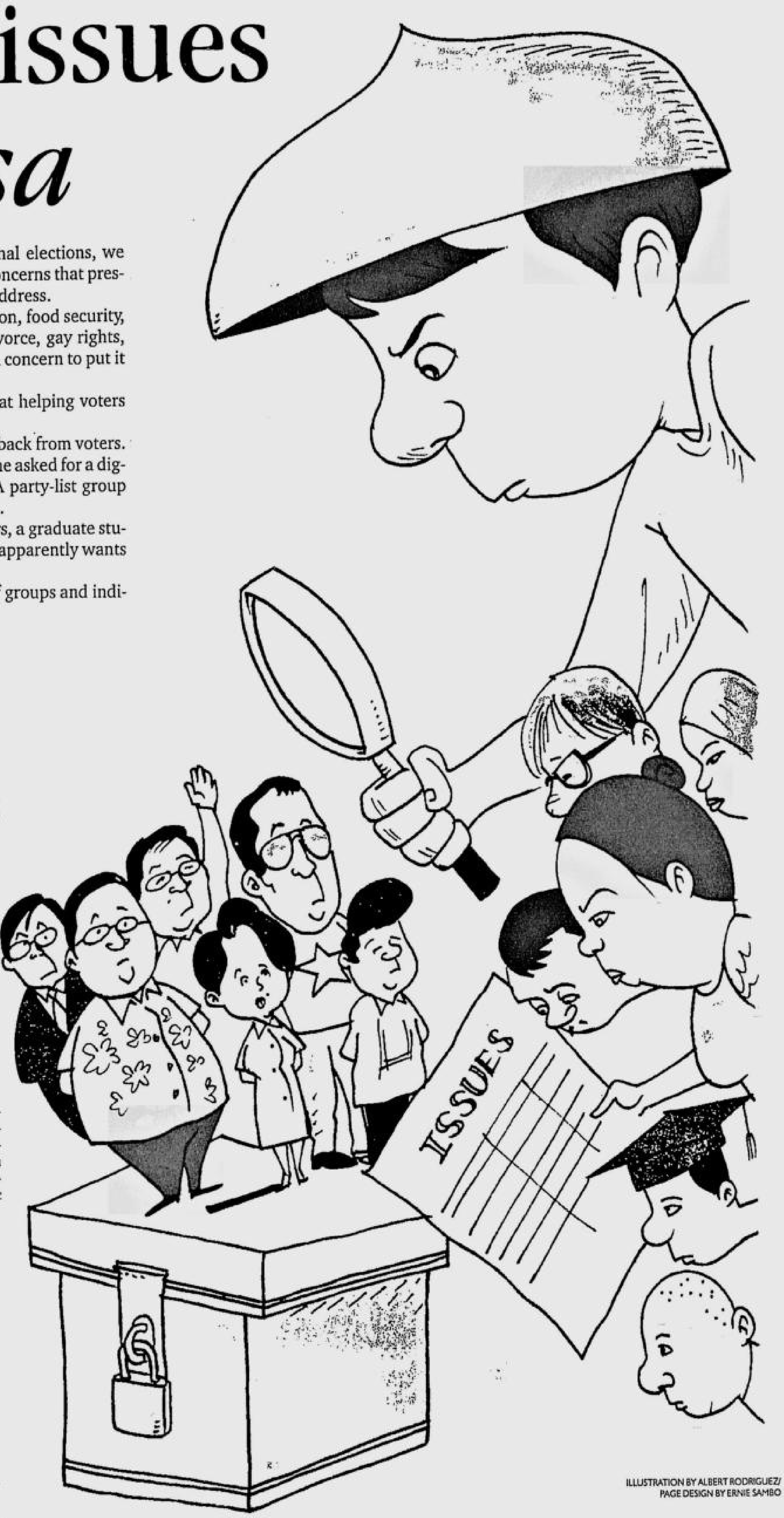
The concerns include poverty, foreign debt, globalization, corruption, food security, environment, Charter change, Erap pardon, *jueteng*, population, divorce, gay rights, education and housing. We came up with a brief background on each concern to put it in perspective.

The list and the stand of the candidates on the issues are aimed at helping voters make an informed choice come May 10.

Since the list came out, we have received a generally positive feedback from voters. A college student wanted to reproduce it for his schoolmates. Someone asked for a digital copy of the list so that he could send it to a friend in Europe. A party-list group plans to distribute it to its members as part of its education campaign.

Others suggested that we include other issues. To reach more voters, a graduate student suggested that we come up with a popular form of the list. She apparently wants a version of the "Issues presidential bets must address" in Filipino.

In the next issue of Talk of the Town, we will print the reactions of groups and individuals to the stand of the six presidential candidates on the issues.



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PAGE DESIGN BY ERNIE SAMBO

Reach out to voters

By Amelia R. Biñas
Graduate student
UP National Center for Public Administration and Governance

I appreciate the INQUIRER for publishing "Issues presidential bets must address," and I'm sure that other concerned Filipinos do, too.

However, may I suggest that the Talk of the Town staff or other journalists do a similar article for a tabloid using a writing style that could be easily understood by most Filipino voters. Perhaps you understand my concern about the *masa*.

Thank you for easing up, even just a little bit, the tension and dread that this presidential elections is bringing about.

People look behind the façade

By Rondel Apelo
Third Year, BS Physics
with computer electronics
De la Salle University, Manila

The "Issues presidential bets must address" was very informative. It made me remember the many issues that our society faces. I did not expect that so many issues remained unresolved and would continue to stifle our nation's growth. Each issue was explained briefly yet effectively, making the reader feel its importance and its impact on him or her.

More importantly, the article made the reader realize that these concerns must be addressed correctly by the presidential candidates if they seek a better future for our country.

The series showcasing the stand of the presidential candidates on the various issues, I believe, is a positive step toward making the people politically mature. This helps us to think critically when we choose candidates. It also tells the presidential candidates that there are people who look behind the façade of style and personality and who demand concrete and definite stand on issues.

Electing public officials must be based on their platform of government. Filipinos must realize the importance of the elections being based on substance and not on style.

We have to learn from our past misjudgments. We should choose wisely those we want to lead our country. This move is called for because of the declining number of people who vote based on the stand of candidates on issues.

As a student, I see the need for an issue-based elections because the May 10 polls will determine my future—the future of the youth.

This will determine if we will have jobs after we graduate, if the market will permit us to engage in our own business, if the environment will still be conducive for life.

Candidates should field questions in front of public

By Rep. Loretta Ann P. Rosales
Akbayan

What a beautiful way to start the morning reading Talk of the Town. It's as refreshing as tomato juice to perk up your Sunday morning.

I want to popularize Talk of the Town's Feb. 15 issue to our chapters and party list for our education campaign on the elections.

A sure sign of a maturing democracy is when citizens begin to ask political leaders what they stand for and where they intend to lead the country.

Conversely, politicians catalyze the maturing process by articulating their vision of government and convincing the electorate that theirs is a political project worth supporting.

It is plain to see that our democracy has hardly reached this point of maturity after 18 years of practice. One just has to observe the sorry level of political literacy among Filipino voters as evidenced by the reasons with which they justify their political choices.

Anyone who offers himself/herself to the electorate has no business running the country if he/she cannot answer the issues categorically and substantively.

Presidential contenders should field questions in front of the public and without the benefit of scripts. It is part of the challenge to show their accountability and transparency.

To substantiate their claims to effectiveness and competence is not a favor to be inflicted on the electorate— it is a responsibility. They must do this while keeping in mind that we are racing against an escalating disenchantment with the democratic process.

Microfinance was missed out

By Norma L. Lasala
Managing director
Erviam Ventures and Management Corp.

I commend you for coming up with a list that covers the essential issues that must be addressed by any competent presidential candidate. However, if I may point out, you have left out a key economic concern that may just be the cornerstone for not only economic development but also for social growth. I am talking of a highly profitable financial service with an equally meaningful social impact but which, unfortunately, is still an underplayed market: microfinance.

Washington Sycip, in an article in the INQUIRER's Business Monday section, pointed out "economic freedom first, then political freedom."

He was right to be bothered by the 1,000-percent interest rate per annum that the "active" poor pay for the 5/6 business of the "Bombay" because "it is impossible to get out of poverty paying interest rates of 1,000-percent a year." And yet these active poor are "more creditworthy than the rich." They manage to maintain a mere two-to-three percent default rate as compared to the hefty P258 billion in nonperforming loans from commercial banks.

Sycip, however, blamed not the "Bombay" but "the slow development of our microfinance banks." A measly 0.1 percent or only P1.7 billion of the P1.8-trillion total loan portfolio of the formal banking sector last year went to the microfinance sector to assist the entrepreneurial poor.

With this obvious asymmetry of resources between the formal financial sector and microenterprises, I am most willing to write about it to raise awareness for microfinance and, more importantly, to build interest in the formal banking sector so that it too may address the underserved market of microfinance.

Include political prisoners

By Jerbert M. Briola
Regional coordinator
Task Force Detainees of the Philippines-Southern Luzon, Lucena City

Featuring the platform of government of the presidential candidates and their stand on a host of issues that affect the lives of the people is truly groundbreaking.

The value of coming out with these stories, I think, stems from our collective desire to depart from the kind of politics we have been exposed to—traditional politics. It's a form of voters' education. Talk of the Town gives voters honest-to-goodness education outside the realm of "entertainment-filled" election campaign.

Indeed, we should take the coming elections seriously. I noticed in the Talk of the Town section that several issues have been addressed, ranging from economic reforms to stamping out criminality.

The issue of political prisoners and detainees, however, has neither been touched nor broached.

The Philippines has 225 political prisoners and detainees. The number is still growing amid the government's "war against terror." They only serve to emphasize the irony of the situation, and their existence teaches us that beneath the surface of modern society, the violence of poverty, injustice and oppression still exist. The cases of political prisoners and detainees are stuck in the quagmire of a skewed judicial system and past governments seemed to have no political will to touch the issue.

With the elections a few months away, all the presidential candidates have said nothing so far about political prisoners and detainees. What can the presidential aspirants offer to the political prisoners' struggle for freedom and justice? How long must they suffer? But it remains to be asked if these questions are on the minds of the presidential candidates. Which brings us to the really exasperating situation about today's elections. The race to Malacañang has already begun yet none of the presidential candidates have presented a platform to address the issue of political prisoners and detainees.

Talk of the Town is allowing voters to know the platform of candidates and is helping them make a choice. But for the same reason, Talk of the Town should include the question about political prisoners to help the public learn about the stand of presidential candidates on the issue, which is crucial for the next administration as part of its talking points for peace and human rights.

A president must know what's wrong about the country

By Manuel V. de Leon
Founder
Sagip Ka 2000 Foundation

Your research staff came up with a comprehensive analysis of what the candidates for president must address. There is a saying that one cannot fix something unless he knows what is wrong.

Unless the president knows what is wrong about the country, he cannot offer possible solutions to the multifarious problems the nation is facing. I made my own notes on what can possibly be done by someone elected to the highest position in the land.

I have no illusions of becoming the president of the Philippines. But definitely, I can share my thoughts about the issues which I believe will guide me in my choice come May 10.

THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2004

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Account for ₱100M, ARMM execs told

COTABATO CITY—Regional legislators want education officials in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to account for over P100 million in teachers' salaries and insurance premium deductions after teachers in the region threatened not to serve in the elections.

On Tuesday, the ARMM's Regional Legislative Assembly (RLA) convened into a committee of the whole to look into the culpability of certain education officials and personnel involved in disbursing funds for salaries and remittances of automatically deducted premiums from teachers' pays.

For years now, the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) has been rejecting applications for loans from teachers in the region because of non-receipt of contributions.

Sources at the GSIS office here said the problem on premium remittances has been prevalent in the last eight years.

Maguindanao Assemblyman Tommy Ala said the RLA wants to know what happened to the P170 million in salary funds and premiums deducted from teachers' pays.

"It's truly unfair to us teachers," said Ferdaus Uko, a public school teacher, whose housing loan application with the GSIS the agency has denied due to incomplete remittances.

Ala said as soon as the investigation starts, the RLA would summon personnel directly involved in premium deduction, officials from the accounting and budgeting departments in the DepEd-ARMM "to determine where this money is, what is being done with it and who are those involved."

While the investigation has yet to start, teachers said they would make true their threat not to serve in the elections.

But Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said the teachers would be held liable if they refuse to serve.

"It is mandated for teachers to serve in all political elections in the country. They will be held criminally liable if they don't do the task for reasons unacceptable to the Comelec," Abalos told radio station dxMS here.

Udtog Kawit, Maguindanao schools division superintendent, said he would personally lead teachers out of the elections.

"That delayed salaries and non-remittances of GSIS premiums are not justifiable grounds not to serve," Abalos said.

ARMM DepEd officer in charge Leovigilda Cinches said the delay in salaries was beyond the agency's control. *Nash B. Maulana with reports from Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Indigenous Asian women seek peace effort role

BAGUIO CITY—Citing their experiences against military and government abuse, representatives of Asian indigenous women from 13 countries said they wanted governments to recognize them as genuine participants in peace efforts and conflict resolutions.

"We do not see ourselves as simply victims, we are survivors of our struggles against militarization and peace building. We recognize and respect indigenous women's contributions to peace building and conflict resolutions," said a declaration signed by 100 women representatives of various Asian indigenous groups.

The women gathered at the Sta. Catalina Convent here for the 2nd Asian Indigenous Women's Conference last week.

The representatives came from Burma, Malaysia, Thailand, Kyrgyztan, Nepal, India, Japan, Philippines, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Mongolia.

Tradition

They said they would participate in assessing the traditional practices and customary laws in their respective tribes to safeguard the rights and welfare of women.

"There should be a renewal of traditional culture. (Some) practices should be strengthened if these benefit women. The women will evaluate these customary laws, (and judge if these) are sensitive to or violate their rights," said Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, executive director of Tebtebba Foundation here.

Corpuz said the situation of indigenous women has worsened 13 years after their first international conference held in Baguio City in 1993.

"Globalization made the situation even worse for women. Because of the liberalization of trade laws such as the World Trade Organization agreement, giant corporations are more aggressive in pursuing their 100-percent ownership of lands within the indigenous peoples territories," Corpuz said.

The conference's participants said they would also work for an end to racial, cultural, religious and gender discrimination and all their manifestations in public policy and practices. *Desiree Caluza,PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

EDWIN BACASMAS

LONESOME BIKER

The setting sun in Catbalogan, Samar casts a silhouette on a lonely bicycle rider as he travels through the town unmindful of the presence of candidates campaigning for votes not far from where he is.

AFP turns down talks for troops' release by NPAs

LEGAZPI CITY—The Armed Forces of the Philippines strongly rejected Tuesday any negotiations with the New People's Army for the release of two soldiers allegedly being held by the rebel group.

Lt. Gen. Alfonso Dagudag, AFP Southern Luzon Unified Command chief, said in a statement, "it is the duly constituted authority and not the terrorists who call the shots."

Dagudag was reacting to the call of Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson, for negotiations for the release of Lt. Ronaldo Fedelino and Pfc. Ronnel Nemenio, of the 42nd Infantry Battalion.

"While it is true that we value the lives of our soldiers, it can never be denied that being killed, injured or held captives by the enemies are just but part of the risks...," Dagudag said.

Fedelino and Nemenio were captured in a rebel ambush in Tinambac, Camarines Sur on March 1. *Joyce Mejillano, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Scientists offer clams for 'adoption'

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ALAMINOS CITY, Pangasinan—At least 10,000 giant clams in a national marine park here are looking for "adoptive parents" who would protect the species from poachers.

Suzanne Mingoa-Licuanan, a marine biologist of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UPMSI), said they are looking for people or groups who would be interested in conservation work for giant clams.

Licuanan said the UPMSI transplanted at least 10,000 clams to the Hundred Islands National Park (HINP) in 2002 to serve as breeding populations of the species.

She said the Philippine Tourism Authority had been generous in funding the UPMSI's biodiversity enhancement projects at the Hundred Islands.

"But unfortunately, some good things come to an end. Funding ended last year, so monitoring of the clams were few and far between. With lack of financial support to monitor the giant clams that were transplanted, these gentle giants now face a formidable enemy—man," she said.

She said clam poaching in the area is rampant, as shown by reports filed at the local police station.

"If poaching continues, needless to say, our efforts to save the Hundred Islands would be wasted," she said.

The giant clams, considered threatened by the United Nations Environmental Protection, were cultured and reared at the UPMSI marine laboratory in Bolinao town before these were transferred to the HINP.

"Restocking giant clams in the Hundred Islands was part of our contribution to posterity, since the Hundred Islands is the country's first national park and a popular destination for Filipinos and foreigners alike," Licuanan said.

While the HINP may not compare to Palawan's El Nido, she said "it is ours (it belongs to the Filipinos), and most Filipinos of average income would be able to afford the amenities provided at the (HINP)."

Interested groups, she said, may get in touch with the UPMSI at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City, or through her e-mail address suzanne@upmsi.ph. Licuanan can be reached at (632) 922-3921 or 920-5301 local 7430. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Army to send more troops to Davao for city fiesta

DAVAO CITY—The military decided to deploy more soldiers here as part of tighter security in connection with next week's celebration of the 67th Araw ng Dabaw.

Lt. Col. Agane Adriatico, military spokesperson for Southeastern Mindanao, said soldiers from the 404th Infantry Brigade based in Compostela Valley would be stationed here to reinforce the existing Task Force Davao.

He said "the additional troops would help the Task Force in its mission of keeping Davao safe from possible terrorist attacks to avoid a repeat of what had happened last year."

At least 48 people were killed while dozens of other people were wounded when bombs went off near the Davao International Airport and the Sasa wharf in March and April.

The blasts prompted Mayor Rodrigo Duterte to ask for more security in and around the city that led to the forming of the Task Force.

But militant groups criticized the heavy deployment of troops to the city. *Anthony S. Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Veluz; 78

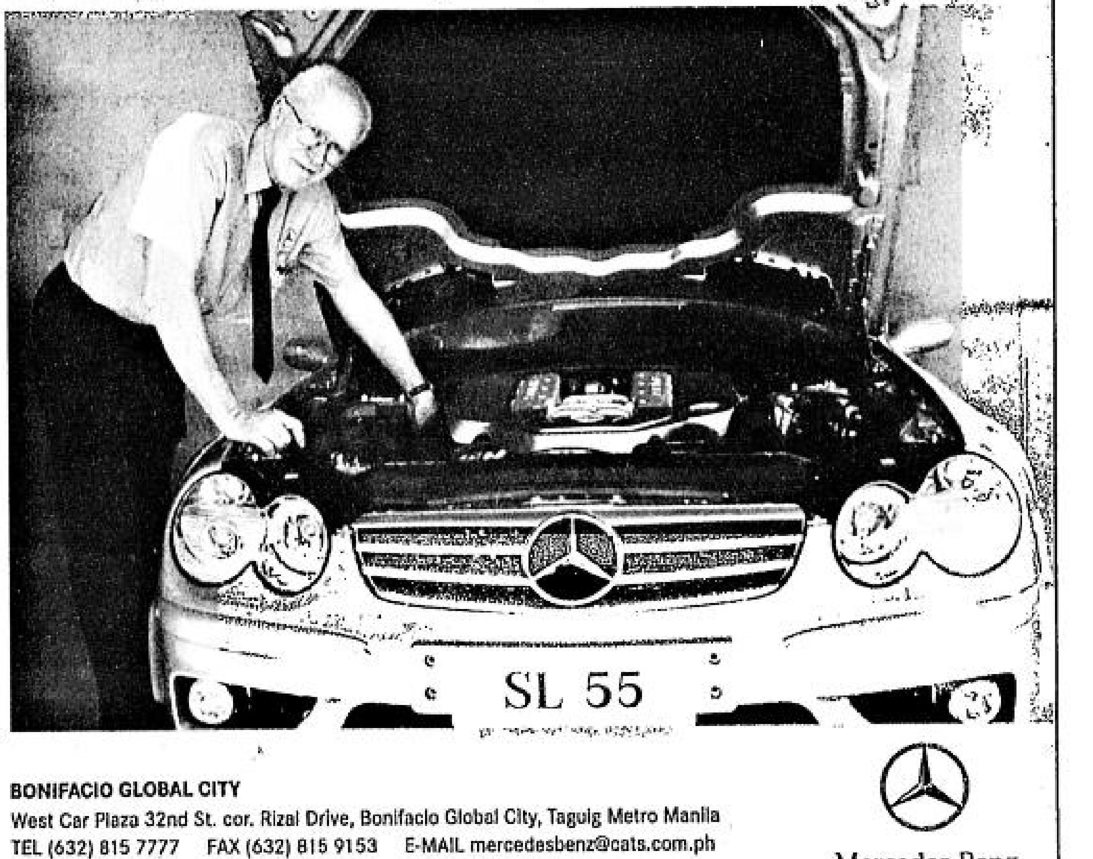
LUCY Baluyot Veluz, former mayor of Del Gallego town in Camarines Sur, died on March 6, 2004. She was 78.

Veluz, also former national president of the Rural Improvement Club, was survived by husband Beriong, also former mayor and children Cynthia and Raymond; Nene and Boy; Bunny and Alaine; Mapet and George; Barry and Chris; Aboy and Marlene; Ysty; Yna and broadcast journalist Arnold Clavio.

Her body lies in Cabasag, Del Gallego. Necrological services will be held March 13, 8 p.m. at the Del Gallego Covered Court in Poblacion Zone 1. She will be buried March 14, 10 a.m., at the Veluz Mausoleum in Cabasag.

SAMAR BARNSTORM

Opposition candidate for senator Juan Ponce Enrile meets with mayoral candidate Wilson Chan (second from left) and Rep. Harlin Abayon of Northern Samar during a sortie of the Kilusan ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino in Samar on March 6.



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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Headless statue: Hero or neglect?

By Gil Francis G. Arevalo
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

IN FRONT of the post office building in Legazpi City's business center is a statue of a headless man that leaves not a few people wondering what it actually represents. Was it that of an unknown guerrilla from Bicol or from another part of the country?

According to historical accounts, Legazpi's port in Barangay Sabang, where the monument was previously found, served as "death grounds" for Filipino guerrillas during World War II.

What further baffles residents is that there are no existing records or photos of the structure. To old-timers, however, it depicts the martyrdom of Bicolano war heroes.

Accidental discovery

On Nov. 22, 1945, laborers digging along the shore of the Albay Gulf in Sabang found what appeared to be a headless human body.

Pacita Jacobo, 72, who has served as barangay chair of Victory Village in Legazpi for the past 15 years, said she was just a teenager when she and some of her neighbors witnessed the find.

"Most of the people say the body had been buried for only a few days. In reality, it had been there for a very long time. Maybe the saltwater had somehow preserved it throughout that period," she theorized.

She said the body had a soldier's uniform and was still intact, but unfortunately, the head was missing.

Another elderly, Tony Arispe, a retired weatherman of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, said the late Don Buenaventura de Erquiaga took the initiative to preserve the body.

Erquiaga was a Spanish businessman-philanthropist and founder of the defunct Legazpi College, now the Aquinas University of Legazpi, in Barangay Rawis. He was an adopted Bicolano.

"At that time, most people in Sabang were not that conscious of the body's relevance because they thought it was just an ordinary corpse. Through Don Erquiaga's initiative, the headless body was given importance and a place was found for its burial in our barangay," Arispe said.

Erquiaga decided to display the body in a "street parade" in honor of those gallant Bicolano soldiers and martyrs during the war against the Japanese occupation forces, he said. The Spaniard later had a monument built in its honor at the pier, where visitors could easily notice it.

The late Mariano Goyena del Prado, who wrote several books about Bicol history, said the monument indeed symbolized Legazpi's guerrilla-martyrs who fought for the liberation of the city against the Japanese soldiers.

Only Erquiaga possessed the documents or pictures pertaining to the headless body since it was accidentally discovered in 1945. However, from the time of his death on Oct. 22, 1959 up to his family's departure from Bicol for Spain, no single material was left, except the small edifice at the pier.

Even the National Historical Institute has no record of this event. Neither has any local historian done any research about it, said Erlinda-Belleza, Legazpi Museum curator, adding that most people now simply ignored the statue or treat it as any ordinary structure.

Incomplete symbolism

In 1997, the monument was transferred to its present site in front of the Legazpi Post Office building. The bones and some "valuable things" that were beside the body when it was found and placed under the monument were no longer there, prompting some local historians, including Kilon Goyena, to remark that the work was an "incomplete symbolism" of heroism and martyrdom.

Goyena, 85, is the son of the late Mariano Goyena del Prado and former chair of the Historical Institute of Legazpi City.

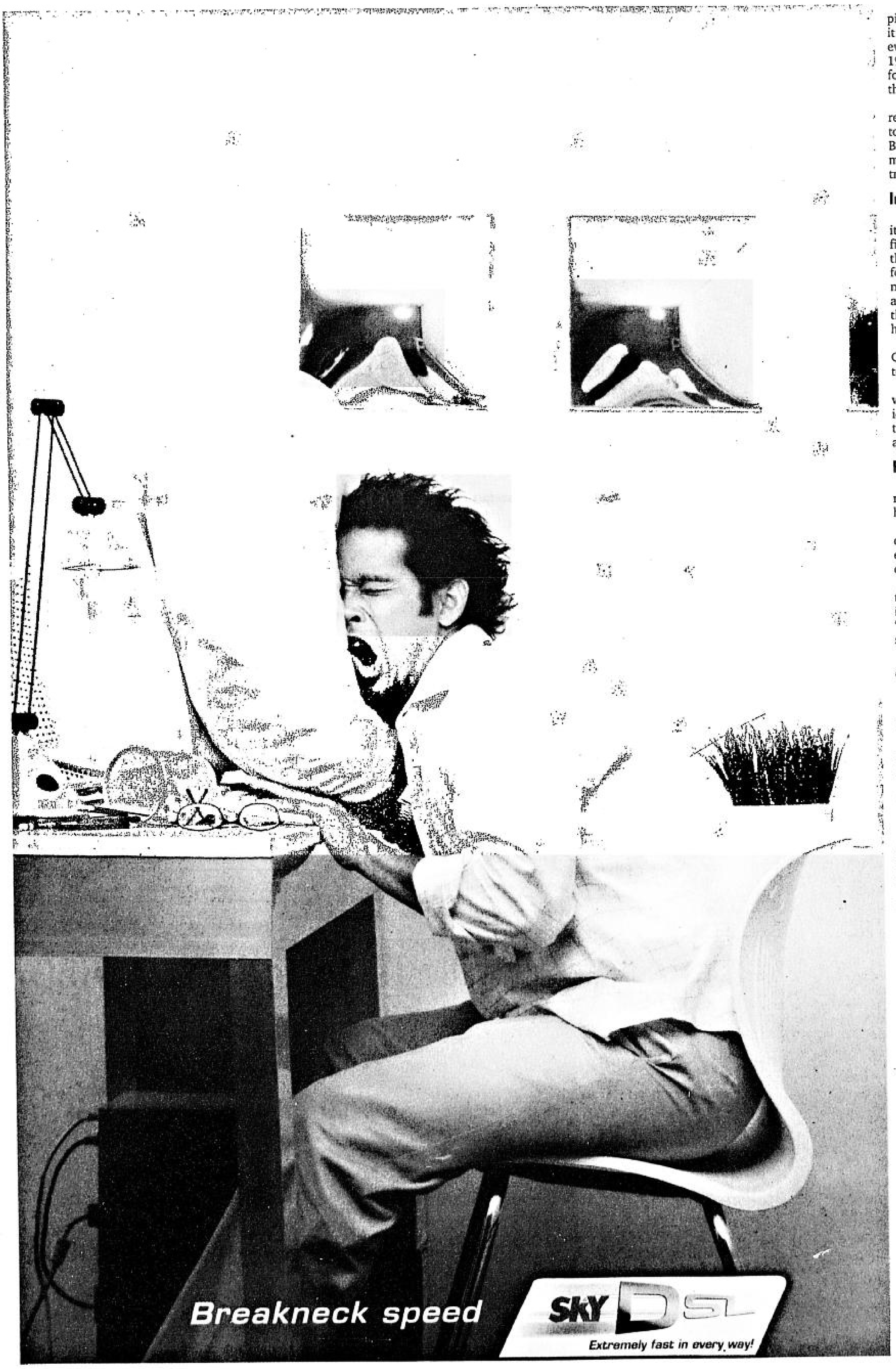
Lola Pacita said she also believed that there was no need to question the headless body's identity. "The most important thing is its historical importance to the region, in general, and to Legazpi City, in particular," she said.

Return

Many residents are now clamoring for the return of the monument to Sabang as they have noted its neglect.

When it was still in their village, they claimed, it was strategically located and properly maintained, and many visitors had taken cognizance of the headless hero.

Since it was transferred downtown, they said, the people have not shown any "cultural sensibility." The monument has become just a regular "*tambayan*" or parking area. Worse, it is now splattered with election posters on its sides.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The dying art of 'tuba'-making

By Michael Jaucian
Legazpi City

IN coconut-producing regions like Bicol, *tuba* (coconut toddy) has become part of a farmer's daily life. In the evening or late afternoon, after retiring from the day's work, he usually joins his fellow villagers for a round or two of the local wine.

With its usually sweet, delicious taste and affordable price, even professionals try to get hold of a gallon of *tuba* for shots in-between discussions. *Tuba* has been a favorite part of the reception during village social gatherings.

Aside from being drunk as wine, *tuba* can be made into vinegar, said Alfredo Rillo, officer in charge of the Philipine Coconut Authority regional office. When *tuba* is fermented for two to three weeks, the vinegar becomes sourer, which is better, he said.

And since no preservative is added when *tuba* is turned into vinegar, Bicolanos prefer to buy it than the commercially branded one being sold in the market.

"The *tuba* gatherer does not worry about disposing the product because there are ready buyers. The demand for natural vinegar is high," Rillo said.

Extinct

Citing records of the PCA regional office, which is based in Legazpi City, Rillo said the Bicolano tuba gatherers were almost close to extinction. This, despite the fact that the region, especially the third district of Albay, has been known for its vast coconut plantations.

Rillo said that in Albay, only a few coconut farmers possessed the skills and enthusiasm in producing *tuba*. A PCA survey of farmers in the province showed that among the thousands of coconut farmers, only seven were active in *tuba* gathering.

In the first district, not a single *tuba* gatherer could be found. The second district has only two, both from Camalig town, while the third district has five—four in Guinobatan town and one in Oas town.

Hoping to pass on the tradition of *tuba* gathering, at least in Albay, elderly experts have decided to train young people who wish to follow in their footsteps and cash in on the industry.

AN APPEAL TO OUR BELOVED PRESIDENT
GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO

Madam President,

We, the country's downstream steel manufacturers and users, are deeply concerned about news reports that the new owners of the recently revived NATIONAL STEEL CORPORATION (NSC) are seeking unconscionable tariff increases to 30% on products they have yet to make.

The downstream steel industry has been consistently supportive of government's efforts to help revive National Steel Corporation. We fully support granting NSC assistance in the form of BOI investment incentives or special economic zone status. However we oppose government's giving NSC special protective tariffs to ensure its viability.

Historically, NSC has not been able to fully satisfy local demand. For this reason, downstream manufacturers have been importing the major portion of their raw material requirements. Imports will continue to be inevitable until this situation is proved otherwise. It is thus unreasonable for NSC to seek tariff increases for products they still have to produce and to produce adequately.

The affected products are vital raw materials and their uses and linkages are shown in the table below. The impact of the increased tariff on the end user is likewise shown. ALL THESE PRODUCTS DIRECTLY AFFECT THE DAILY LIVES OF THE ORDINARY FILIPINO.

Table of Critical Linkages

RAW MATERIAL	FINISHED PRODUCTS / END USE	EFFECT OF 30% TARIFF ON FINISHED GOODS
Steel Billets	Steel bars for housing, roads, bridges, buildings, infrastructure, steel merchant shapes for windows, trusses, columns, and other structures.	as high as 23%
Hot Rolled Coil (HRC)	LPG tanks, steel pipes, decking, purlins, housing frames, steel studs, steel drums, prefabricated metal components, automobile parts, jeepney and tricycle bodies.	as high as 25%
Cold Rolled Coil (CRC)	GI sheets for roofing and gutters, home appliances, vehicle bodies, aircon ducting, kitchen wares, fabricated metal products, water tanks.	as high as 25%
Steel Plates	Welded structural shapes for buildings and machineries, shipbuilding and ship repair, spare parts manufacturing.	as high as 27%
Tinplates	Tin cans for food products such as milk, fruit juices, sardines, cooking oil, processed meats, biscuits, bottle caps for beverages and medicines, industrial containers for paints, solvents and the like.	as high as 20%

Local steel manufacturers are already laboring under tremendous competitive pressures due to tight global conditions. A tariff increase will raise steel prices, reduce demand and further erode industry's ability to compete.

On the employment front, many of the 63,000 workers now employed in the downstream industries will lose their jobs as a result of plant closures. Social unrest will escalate. In contrast, NSC now employing 500 workers is expected to employ 2,500 people in two years' time.

On the financial side, non-performing loans of banks will increase further and this will threaten the stability of the Philippine banking system. Government revenues from taxes and business fees will also suffer.

Madam President, please consider most carefully the impact of NSC's request on the entire steel industry, the consuming public, and the whole Philippine economy. National Steel Corporation is not the steel industry but only one member of the local steel community.

PLEASE DO NOT FAVOR NATIONAL STEEL CORPORATION AT THE EXPENSE OF THE ENTIRE STEEL INDUSTRY.

Sincerely yours,

WELLINGTON Y. TONG, President
Philippine Steel Rolling Mills
Association (PSRMA)

SALVIO D. PEREZ, President
Filipino Galvanizers Institute

HENRY A. TAÑEDO, President
Tin Can Manufacturers Association
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PHILIPPINE DAILY
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METROBRIEFS

Shot point-blank

A WORKER died after a security guard shot him in Marikina City the other night. Police said the victim, Ricardo Reyes, 29, was drinking with buddies on J.P. Rizal Street around 8 p.m. when the guard, Gregorio Naquin, shot him four times. He fled after the shooting. The police are still investigating the motive behind the killing. *Luige del Puerto*

Interpol conference

OVER 100 International Police from various Asian countries will convene in Metro Manila for two days next week to discuss trends in crime and crime-fighting methods in order to improve police work in the region. National Bureau of Investigation's Interpol chief Ricardo Diaz said the 18th Asian Regional Conference of the Interpol will be held at the Edsa Shangri-La in Mandaluyong on March 16 and 17. The event would be hosted by Interpol Manila, which is composed of the NBI, the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime, the Philippine National Police, the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Immigration. *Leila Salaverria*

Torres High reunion

A GRAND reunion and homecoming of all the graduates of Torres High School will be held on March 20, Saturday, at 3 p.m. at the campus oval. Henry A. Capule, board chair and president of the Torres High School General Alumni Foundation Inc., said proceeds from the registration fee of P100 per person would be used for the benefit of the school.

ASTEP confab set

THE ASSOCIATION of Science Teachers and Educators of the Philippines (ASTEP) reels off its 2004 activities through its first national conference-workshop on April 15-17 at Punta Villa Resort in Arevalo, Iloilo City, with the theme, "A Step Towards Excellence in Science Teaching." All science teachers in the elementary and high school levels are invited to the three-day conference, which will include a side trip to Guimaras Island. For details, interested science teachers can call the ASTEP secretariat on or before March 15 at 647-3761 and telefax 647-4374, or email queries at elma41441@hotmail.com.

Bus scheme clogs Edsa traffic

By Margaux Ortiz

TRAFFIC on Edsa was unusually heavy yesterday with the suspension of the number coding scheme for buses, according to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority traffic chief.

"We could only imagine the congestion with the additional 400 to 600 buses plying Edsa," MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said in a phone interview.

Vergel de Dios said the number coding scheme had removed 20 percent of the 3,000 buses plying the major thoroughfare everyday.

The MMDA official said there were incidents in the past "when traffic in Edsa was as heavy as it was yesterday," but these were only during "abnormal situations."

Vergel de Dios said the MMDA would have to control the buses on Edsa through the Organized Bus Route (OBR), wherein the number of buses dispatched will correspond to the number of passengers on the road at a given time.

"We would have to improve the OBR to restore order on Edsa, with the suspension of the scheme," Vergel de Dios said.

Integrated Metro Bus Owners Association (Imboa) president Claire dela Fuente said the exemption of public buses from the number coding scheme would mean additional income for the operators.

Dela Fuente said colorum FX taxis, which took advantage of the scheme, increased from 50,000 to 90,000 in the past year.

"Our load factor was actually lessened because of the proliferation of these FX taxis," Dela Fuente said.

She stressed that with the suspension of the scheme, the buses would be able to "reclaim their rightful place on the road."

The Imboa president said passengers preferred public buses over FX taxis because of the cheaper fare.

She said people had no choice but to ride colorum FX taxis with the shortage of public buses on Edsa.

"We are grateful to President Macapagal-Arroyo for granting our request," she said.

I grieve for the fallen cop

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

EVEN if I didn't know him, I grieve for rookie PO1 Diosdado Campos, who died at the hands of a hostage-taker at the Farmers Plaza in Cubao, Quezon City. Campos died in the line of duty.

Even if I hardly knew him, he touched my life in one way. I saw him and another rookie cop trying to stop the still unidentified gunman who was holding a woman hostage.

I was about 35 meters from the hostage-taker and the woman-hostage during the last few minutes of the hostage drama. I saw the hostage-taker shoot Campos.

* * *

If there's a lesson that could be learned from that hostage drama, it is that cops should be taught how to handle all kinds of dangerous situations in the streets while they're at training school.

A couple of years ago, I visited a school for deputy sheriffs in California. I saw how thorough the students were taught how to face danger in the streets. In one session where I sat in, there was a cops-and-robbers play-acting where the participants were student deputy sheriffs. Some of the students took on the role of criminals.

After each session, the students were judged by their instructors and fellow students on how they fared in handling a "dangerous" situation. And then, there were video clips showing dramatizations of past life-and-death situations where cops made fatal mistakes.

* * *

Apparently, Campos and his buddy, PO1 Rodolfo Chen, were sent out into the streets "raw" or without the proper training.

Campos and Chen are part of the 1,000 rookie cops fresh from training school assigned to augment the local cops in Metro Manila.

I saw how Campos and Chen hesitated in shooting the hostage-taker, whose back was turned toward them. The distance between the two cops, hiding behind a big MRT post, and the hostage-taker and the hostage was five feet. At that distance, either Campos or Chen had a clear shot at the head of the hostage-taker.

Campos and Chen's hesitation in shooting the hostage-taker proved fatal to Campos.

* * *

Vice Adm. Arthur Gosingan, Coast Guard commandant, said he was in Pattaya, Thailand, attending a conference during the SuperFerry 14 tragedy.

His statement was in reaction to my comments about how incompetent the Coast Guard chief was in dealing with the sea mishap.

The Pattaya conference was attended by all coast guard commandants in Asia.

* * *

The acting commandant at that time was Rear Adm. Danilo Abinoja, Gosingan's deputy.

Would you believe Abinoja got the report about the mishap at 5:30 a.m., hours after the start of the tragedy? He was asleep all the while and nobody at the Coast Guard headquarters informed him about it.

Abinoja probably has a sleeping sickness and didn't want to be disturbed in his sleep.

Cops bust rob gang in Rizal

By Luige del Puerto

THE POLICE said they have nailed a notorious crime group believed to be responsible for the series of robberies in Rizal towns.

This developed after the police arrested the group's leader and four of its members in a series of operations spanning two towns on Tuesday.

The police identified the suspects as Aaron Arca, the alleged leader, Joward Acedillo, Guiler Baul, Jerwin de los Santos and Arman Lapad.

Chief Insp. Rodino Elfa, town police chief, said Acedillo led them to the other members of the group after he was caught robbing the cell phone of Agnes Galvez-Aguirre on National Road shortly before lunch Tuesday.

Elfa said Acedillo cracked under investigation and identified his cohorts.

Two of the suspects—De los Santos and Baul—were nabbed after allegedly robbing the phone of Jose Pelaez at 7:30 p.m. at the Tikling Junction. They also admitted involvement in the rash of motorcycle thefts in Rizal.

Hundreds accosted

From page A20

warning and told to obtain a license plate within 15 days.

Metrobase officials pointed out that conduction stickers were only valid for a week.

Vehicles with commemorative and vanity plates were also pulled over but allowed to drive on if their drivers presented valid permits.

But MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said the Land Transportation Office (LTO) should stop the issuing of vanity plates.

The National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTF) revived the "no plate, no travel" policy in its campaign to thwart criminality.

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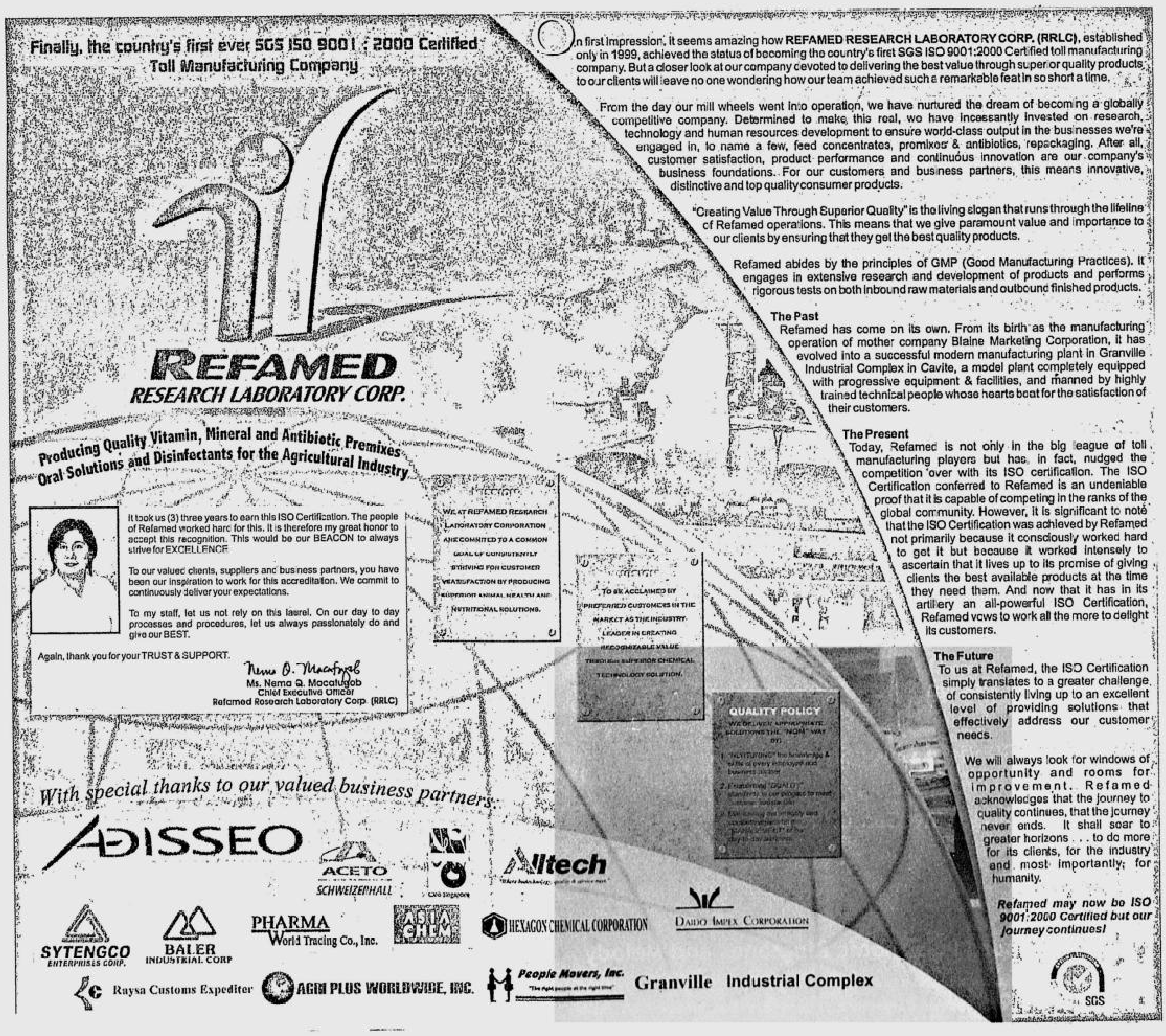

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From the day our mill wheels went into operation, we have nurtured the dream of becoming a globally competitive company. Determined to make this real, we have incessantly invested on research, technology and human resources development to ensure world-class output in the businesses we're engaged in, to name a few, feed concentrates, premixes & antibiotics, repackaging. After all, customer satisfaction, product performance and continuous innovation are our company's business foundations. For our customers and business partners, this means innovative, distinctive and top quality consumer products.

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To my staff, let us not rely on this laurel. On our day to day processes and procedures, let us always passionately do and give our BEST.

Again, thank you for your TRUST & SUPPORT.

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AGRI PLUS WORLDWIDE, INC.
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Granville Industrial Complex
SGS

METROBRIEFS

Shot point-blank

A WORKER died after a security guard shot him in Marikina City the other night. Police said the victim, Ricardo Reyes, 29, was drinking with buddies on J.P. Rizal Street around 8 p.m. when the guard, Gregorio Naquin, shot him four times. He fled after the shooting. The police are still investigating the motive behind the killing. *Luige del Puerto*

Interpol conference

OVER 100 International Police from various Asian countries will convene in Metro Manila for two days next week to discuss trends in crime and crime-fighting methods in order to improve police work in the region. National Bureau of Investigation's Interpol chief Ricardo Diaz said the 18th Asian Regional Conference of the Interpol will be held at the Edsa Shangri-La in Mandaluyong on March 16 and 17. The event would be hosted by Interpol Manila, which is composed of the NBI, the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime, the Philippine National Police, the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Immigration. *Leila Salaverria*

Torres High reunion

A GRAND reunion and homecoming of all the graduates of Torres High School will be held on March 20, Saturday, at 3 p.m. at the campus oval. Henry A. Capule, board chair and president of the Torres High School General Alumni Foundation Inc., said proceeds from the registration fee of P100 per person would be used for the benefit of the school.

ASTEP confab set

THE ASSOCIATION of Science Teachers and Educators of the Philippines (ASTEP) reels off its 2004 activities through its first national conference-workshop on April 15-17 at Punta Villa Resort in Arevalo, Iloilo City, with the theme "A Step Towards Excellence in Science Teaching." All science teachers in the elementary and high school levels are invited to the three-day conference, which will include a side trip to Guimaras Island. For details, interested science teachers can call the ASTEP secretariat on or before March 15 at 647-3761 and telefax 647-4374, or email queries at elma41441@hotmail.com.

Bus scheme clogs Edsa traffic

By Margaux Ortiz

TRAFFIC on Edsa was unusually heavy yesterday with the suspension of the number coding scheme for buses, according to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority traffic chief.

"We could only imagine the congestion with the additional 400 to 600 buses plying Edsa," MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said in a phone interview.

Vergel de Dios said the number coding scheme had removed 20 percent of the 3,000 buses plying the major thoroughfare everyday.

The MMDA official said there were incidents in the past "when traffic in Edsa was as heavy as it was yesterday," but these were only during "abnormal situations."

Vergel de Dios said the MMDA would have to control the buses on Edsa through the Organized Bus Route (OBR), wherein the number of buses dispatched will correspond to the number of passengers on the road at a given time.

"We would have to improve the OBR to restore order on Edsa, with the suspension of the scheme," Vergel de Dios said.

Integrated Metro Bus Owners Association (Imboa) president Claire dela Fuente said the exemption of public buses from the number coding scheme would mean additional income for the operators.

Dela Fuente said colorum FX taxis, which took advantage of the scheme, increased from 50,000 to 90,000 in the past year.

"Our load factor was actually lessened because of the proliferation of these FX taxis," Dela Fuente said.

She stressed that with the suspension of the scheme, the buses would be able to "reclaim their rightful place on the road."

The Imboa president said passengers preferred public buses over FX taxis because of the cheaper fare.

She said people had no choice but to ride colorum FX taxis with the shortage of public buses on Edsa.

"We are grateful to President Macapagal-Arroyo for granting our request," she said.

I grieve for the fallen cop

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

EVEN if I didn't know him, I grieve for rookie PO1 Diosdado Campos, who died at the hands of a hostage-taker at the Farmers Plaza in Cubao, Quezon City. Campos died in the line of duty.

Even if I hardly knew him, he touched my life in one way. I saw him and another rookie cop trying to stop the still unidentified gunman who was holding a woman hostage.

I was about 35 meters from the hostage-taker and the woman-hostage during the last few minutes of the hostage drama. I saw the hostage-taker shoot Campos.

* *

If there's a lesson that could be learned from that hostage drama, it is that cops should be taught how to handle all kinds of dangerous situations in the streets while they're at training school.

A couple of years ago, I visited a school for deputy sheriffs in California. I saw how thorough the students were taught how to face danger in the streets. In one session where I sat in, there was a cops-and-robbers play-acting where the participants were student deputy sheriffs. Some of the students took on the role of criminals.

After each session, the students were judged by their instructors and fellow students on how they fared in handling a "dangerous" situation. And then, there were video clips showing dramatizations of past life-and-death situations where cops made fatal mistakes.

Apparently, Campos and his buddy, PO1 Rodolfo Chen, were sent out into the streets "raw" or without the proper training.

Campos and Chen are part of the 1,000 rookie cops fresh from training school assigned to augment the local cops in Metro Manila.

I saw how Campos and Chen hesitated in shooting the hostage-taker, whose back was turned toward them. The distance between the two cops, hiding behind a big MRT post, and the hostage-taker and the hostage was five feet. At that distance, either Campos or Chen had a clear shot at the head of the hostage-taker.

Campos and Chen's hesitation in shooting the hostage-taker proved fatal to Campos.

Vice Adm. Arthur Gosingan, Coast Guard commandant, said he was in Pattaya, Thailand, attending a conference during the SuperFerry 14 tragedy.

His statement was in reaction to my comments about how incompetent the Coast Guard chief was in dealing with the sea mishap.

The Pattaya conference was attended by all coast guard commandants in Asia.

* *

The acting commandant at that time was Rear Adm. Danilo Abinoja, Gosingan's deputy.

Would you believe Abinoja got the report about the mishap at 5:30 a.m., hours after the start of the tragedy? He was asleep all the while and nobody at the Coast Guard headquarters informed him about it.

Abinoja probably has a sleeping sickness and didn't want to be disturbed in his sleep.

Cops bust rob gang in Rizal

By Luige del Puerto

THE POLICE said they have nailed a notorious crime group believed to be responsible for the series of robberies in Rizal towns.

This developed after the police arrested the group's leader and four of its members in a series of operations spanning two towns on Tuesday.

The police identified the suspects as Aaron Arca, the alleged leader, Joward Acedillo, Guiler Baul, Jerwin de los Santos and Arman Lapad.

Chief Insp. Rodino Elfa, town police chief, said Acedillo led them to the other members of the group after he was caught robbing the cell phone of Agnes Galvez-Aguirre on National Road shortly before lunch Tuesday.

Elfa said Acedillo cracked under investigation and identified his cohorts.

Two of the suspects—De los Santos and Baul—were nabbed after allegedly robbing the phone of Jose Pelaez at 7:30 p.m. at the Tikling Junction. They also admitted involvement in the rash of motorcycle thefts in Rizal.

Hundreds accosted

From page A20

warning and told to obtain a license plate within 15 days.

Metrobase officials pointed out that conduction stickers were only valid for a week.

Vehicles with commemorative and vanity plates were also pulled over but allowed to drive on if their drivers presented valid permits.

But MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said the Land Transportation Office (LTO) should stop the issuing of vanity plates.

The National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTF) revived the "no plate, no travel" policy in its campaign to thwart criminality.

Police officials said criminals had been known to use vehicles without license plates in their activities to confuse witnesses and pursuing lawmen.

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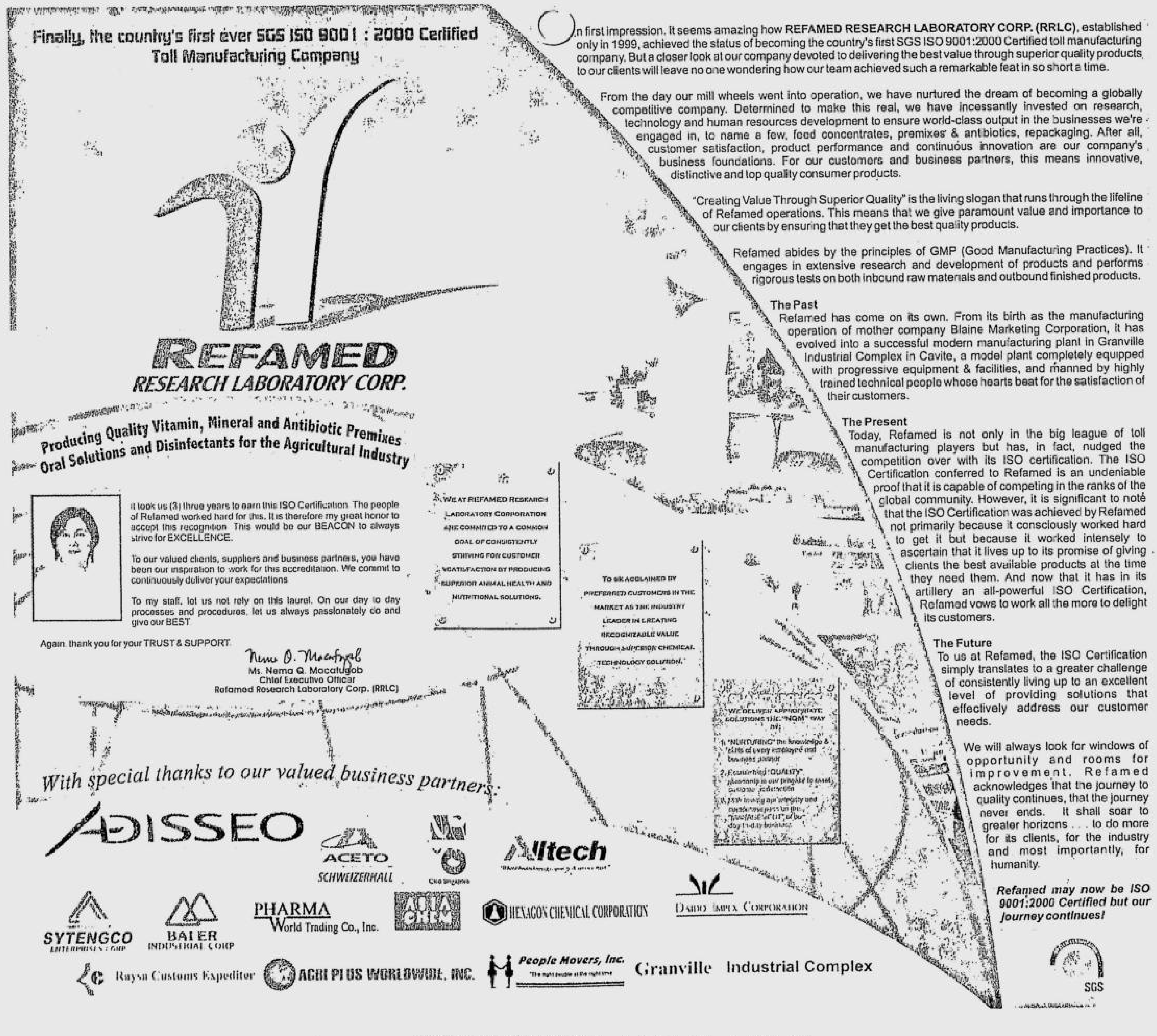

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METRO

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

FOUR DIGIT
3 2 1 5
(In exact order)

SUERTRES
1 3 5

MEGALOTTO 6/45
7 23 27 37 41 43

Tanong ng Bayan
INQ TV
Ngayong Alas-10 Ng Gabi

Presidential debates:
DINADAGA BA SI FPJ?

Sa mga survey, pantay na ang Panday at ang Pangulo. E, ba't ayaw pa rin ni Fernando Poe Jr. na sumabak sa debate? Talaga bang walang mapapala ang taong bayan sa mga debate? O 'di kaya takot lang mapahiya ang Da King? Ang sagot nina INQUIRER columnist Neal Cruz, Professor Josephine Aguilar of UST, and FPJ spokesman Rep. Francis Escudero, ngayong alas-10 ng gabi, sa INQTV on ABC.

ABC

NO PLATE, NO TRAVEL POLICY

Hundreds accosted

By Margaux Ortiz

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) reported yesterday that more than 200 private and public vehicles were pulled over as the government tightened the enforcement of the "no plate, no travel" policy.

As of 5 p.m., a total of 221 vehicles were accosted.

Of those pulled over, 27 were impounded. These comprised of 13 private vehicles, 11 public utility vehicles, and three motorcycles.

A motorist was arrested for driving without a license.

MMDA traffic enforcers conducted the checks with members of the National Capital Region Police Office.

According to the MMDA Metrobase, vehicles with no license plates were told to pull over and asked to present their registration papers.

Motorists who failed to produce the official receipt or certificate of registration, delivery receipt or sales invoice were immediately impounded. Owners of impounded vehicles face a P5,000 fine plus surcharges.

Motorists who had the required documents were given a

HUNDREDS/ A19

POLICEMEN manning a checkpoint along Marcos Highway on the border of Antipolo City and Marikina City inspect a vehicle while enforcing the "No Plate, No Travel" policy. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

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7 traffic men fall in drive vs mulcters

By Tina Santos

SEVEN traffic enforcers, including a policeman and four Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) men, were arrested in Manila and Pasay City in a drive against mulcters.

Those arrested were identified as PO1 Emmanuel Reyes Danao, assigned to the Western Police District Headquarters Support Group; Dennis Chatto, Gary Palma, Rogelio Zuniega, Giovanni Orillos, all of the MMDA; and Jesus Bejer and Jaime Legazpi, both of Manila Traffic Auxiliary Bureau.

Entrapment

National Capital Region Police Office Director Ricardo de Leon said Danao was arrested in an entrapment operation by the Regional Intelligence and Investigation Division-Regional Intelligence Special Operations Office on Tuesday along Genero Street, Velasquez, Tondo, Manila.

Recovered from Danao was P250.

Meanwhile, Chatto and Palma were arrested on March 8 at the corner of Edsa and Taft Avenue, Pasay City on the complaint of a jeepney driver.

Zuniega and Orillos were collared at the corner of Quirino Avenue and Mabini Street for allegedly asking for money from traffic violators.

Lastly, Bejer and Legaspi were caught while reportedly mulcting money from a motorist at the corner of Quirino Avenue and Mother Ignacia Street in Malate.

De Leon said charges were being readied against the suspects.

Women's group, liquor maker go to war over ads

By Armand Nocum

MEMBERS of women's group Gabriela yesterday called on consumers to boycott a liquor product after its maker refused to pull out advertisements which they described as "offensive."

Destileria Limtuaco, the maker of Napoleon brandy, was quick to retaliate by filing graft charges against Gabriela president Liza Maza.

Gabriela launched its "Boycott Napoleon" campaign during a picket yesterday morning outside the Destileria's offices on Edsa, Balintawak, Quezon City.

It also pressed its demand for the liquor maker to pull out Napoleon's "Kinse Años" ads, which they claimed encouraged men to prefer 15-year-old girls.

"Contrary to the brandy maker's claim that only Gabriela find the ad offensive, we enjoin other women's groups, church groups and other people's organizations, as well as concerned individuals to speak out and boycott the product," Maza said in a statement.

Charges filed

At the Office of the Ombudsman, Destileria lodged a four-page complaint against Maza and Gabriela secretary general Cristina Palabay.

In the complaint, Destileria executive vice president Olivia Limpe-Aw said Maza's "false and malicious accusation" has caused Aw to suffer "grave and irreparable injury" after advertisements of the "Napoleon 15 years old brandy" were pulled out from the radio stations, billboards and posters by the Advertising Board of the Philippines (AdBoard).

It was Maza's letter to the AdBoard that led to the pulling out of the advertisements.

Aw said Maza's act of writing the AdBoard showed "manifest partiality, evident bad faith, and gross inexcusable negligence."

With Tina Santos

SPORTS

E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Teddyvic S. Melendres**
Assistant Editor **Edwin M. Villanueva**

SPORTS TV

BASKETBALL: NBA - Lakers vs Celtics; 8 a.m. (r - 10 p.m.); Solar Sports; Cavs vs Raptors; 7 p.m.: IBC 13 - Old foes LA and Boston relive their rivalry while King James and Vinsanity engage in an aerial encounter when Cleveland visits Toronto.

NBA Greatest Games - Lakers vs Celtics, Game 2, 1984 Finals: 12 noon; Solar Sports - Magic and Bird take center stage as LA and Boston slug it out for the title 20 years ago.

FOOTBALL: UEFA Champions League; 12 noon; 2:30 p.m.; 5:30 p.m.; 8:30 p.m. and 10:45 p.m. - Check out Europe's premier clubs in action.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Compiled by L. Mangulat

Pacquiao battles Marquez May 8

By Salven L. Lagumbay,
Contributor

IT'S Juan Manuel "Dinamita" Marquez after all, but the title fight has been advanced to May 8.

With the most important aspect of his eagerly awaited return to the ring settled, Manny Pacquiao is now in a hurry to leave for the US and get in shape for his first fight since stopping former world featherweight great Marco Antonio Barrera of Mexico last November.

Pacquiao wants to leave on March 19, but his business manager, Rod Nazario, knowing that Manny needs to get back into serious training fast, wants him to fly to Los Angeles to be with trainer Freddie Roach either tomor-

PACQUIAO/ A23

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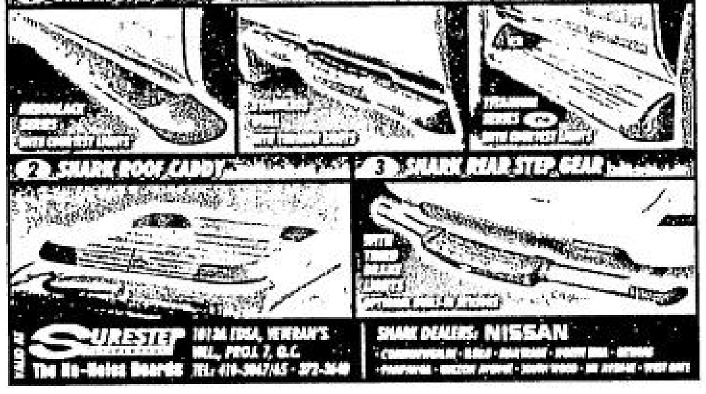
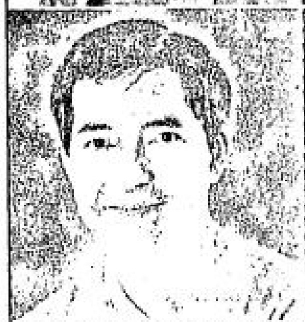


"I look much better with more hair!"
- Jemuel



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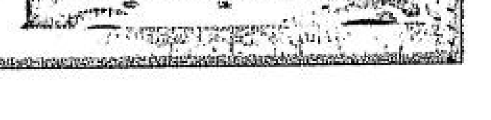

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LONG POWER

Beermen topple Pals

GAME TODAY (Balanga, Bataan)
5:30 p.m.—FedEx vs Barangay Ginebra

By June Navarro

ART Long proved he was more than just an intimidating presence in the paint as the San Miguel import powered the Beermen to a 100-96 win over the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals last night in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Using his beefy 6-foot-7 frame to the hilt, Long outplayed Asi Taulava and Randy Holcomb in the shaded area all game long as the Beermen stole the solo leadership from the Phone Pals.

The Beermen improved to 3-0 while handing the Phone Pals their first defeat in four games.

"Art showed tremendous discipline on the court. He's the strength of the team and he kept us together in tough moments," said San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico.

Long, who had 18 points and 10 rebounds to backstop Dorian Peña's 19 markers and 12 rebounds, made the defensive stops that slowed down Taulava and Holcomb in the final half.

Failing to throw his weight around in the paint, Taulava brought his game to the three-point area and canned four triples to finish with 20 points. Holcomb was also stymied on several occasions but still managed 24 points.

Danny Ildefonso also sparkled by pumping in nine of his 18 points in the fourth quarter while Danny Seigle pitched in some quality minutes for the ailing Dondon Hontiveros and also finished with 18.

It was Ildefonso's slam dunk against Taulava that broke the Phone Pals' momentum, putting the Beermen beyond reach, 95-89, with 32 ticks remaining.

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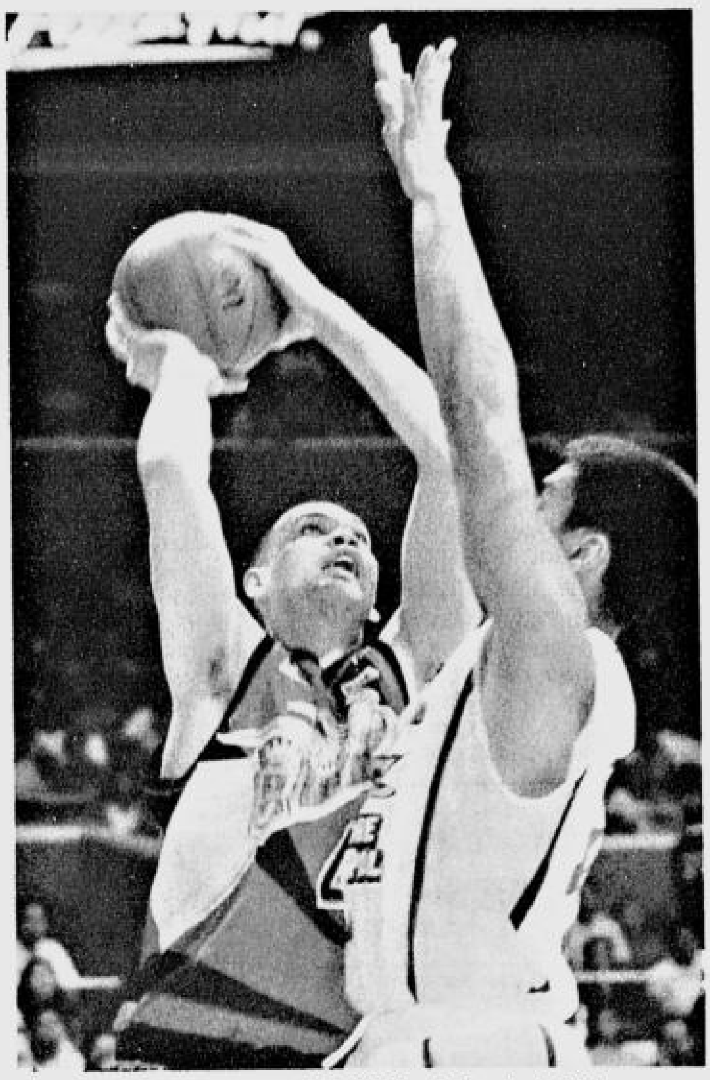

SEIGLE (left) tries to score off Mark Telan during their PBA game won by San Miguel Beer, 100-96, last night. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

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ROSALES

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Al S. Mendoza

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"Of course, you will never forget how to play this great game," said Montelibano, the former governor.

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"This will carry my family into two days of big meals on the table," said a smiling Totong in Ilonggo.

Before teeing off, the governor smiled broadly before a large, appreciative crowd that included, among others, Glo Domingo of Southwoods, Aloma Lopez, Ellen Chua and Menchie Millonado of Wack Wack, Beth Menchavez and Hilda Badong of Riviera, Medy Agustin of The Orchard, jeweler Maria Brumann of Alabang, Maita Lustre, Gabby Monfort and Jocelyn Garcia of Marapara, and Boy Piccio and Jay Montelibano of Bacolod Golf & Country Club.

Oh, yes, Jay. Jay, the Australian wife of the former governor, has been acting out her role since Monday as host to 81 ladies from 17 clubs nationwide in superb fashion.

"If not for Jay, we would not be enjoying another great week of golf and the usual hospitality accorded us consistently whenever we come to Bacolod," said Alice Andrada, who has been the Southern Ladies' mother hen for 18 uninterrupted years now.

The tournament, born in 1963 in Cebu City, had a dramatic moment on Tuesday when Wack Wack's Leana Farrales scored a hole-in-one at the scenic par-3 18th with her mother, Vicky, watching.

"The ball hit the green, bounced once and disappeared into the hole," said Jay Montelibano, who was in the clubhouse watching the mother-and-daughter tandem tee off on 18.

In scoring her ace at the 165-yard hole of the Bacolod Golf & Country Club, the petite Leana used what she called a "Mizuno Rescue Club" that has a loft of 22 degrees.

It would have won Leana a brand-new Mizuno set had she did the trick during the tournament ending tomorrow.

"It was a thrill indeed but, unfortunately, there was no prize. But that's OK," said Leana, who scored her first hole-in-one in 1994 at Evercrest in Tagaytay City in a pre-tournament event of the Johnnie Walker Classic.

But if I know Jay Montelibano, she would not let Leana's feat go unrecognized, if not un-rewarded.

For starters, how about gifting Leana a crate of your delicious guavas, Jay?

Every ladies choice will make a difference.

***

FASTBREAK. Golf bridges friendships. After renewing my ties with Joe Cajili, Bacolod's chicken king, I got the bonus of meeting again great guys like inventor Ramon Uy and PAL's Job Lamela and gaining new friends in Oca Hernandez and Dr. Ed Ordonez. Cheers to you guys, especially, the good doctor, who was a great host on Tuesday.

Pascual, Brodette sparkle in Piata Cup

THEODY Pascual and Philip Brodette captured the low net and low gross titles, respectively, in the inaugural staging of the Piata Golf Cup presented by Thai Airways International recently at Sta. Elena Golf Club in Cabuyao, Laguna.

Pascual tallied a System 36 net score of 69 to claim the low net plum while Brodette submitted a gross of 78 to top a big field of 175 players in the event organized by the Philippine IATA Association of Travel Agents (Piata).

Topping their respective divisions were Mario Naval in Class A, Ed Mapa in Class B, Fernando Piedad in Class C and Carina Ricamonte in the ladies division. Rey Agustin and Trina Francisco won the nearest-the-pin contests sponsored by American Express.

DHL Philippines, Philippine Airlines, Royal Caribbean International and Smart Communications were the major sponsors of the tourney which was organized by a committee headed by Frank Khouri and Vicky Gonzales.

Hole sponsors were Abacus, ABCI (Gatorade), Amadeus, American Express, British Telecom, Deutsche Bank, Galileo, GG&A, Gourmet Farms Inc., Ice Vodka Bar, Kuoni Travel Ltd., Marsman Drysdale Foods, Metrobank, Montemar Beach Club, Pacsports, Philcomsat Holdings, Prudential Life, Singapore Tourism Board, Suarez & Sons, Teledata, Trends & Technologies.

Cathay Pacific, Cebu Pacific, China Airlines, Continental Airlines, Japan Airlines, Kenya Air, KLM, Lufthansa, Northwest Airlines, Qantas, Qatar Airways and Trafalgar Tours, meanwhile, donated tickets to various destinations abroad that were raffled off.

Naval beat Glenn Franisco by one with a 69, Mapa scored a 72 then nipped Ed Garcia in the countback while Piedad's 73 gave him a three-stroke win over Mandy Miole. Ricamonte, scoring a 69, won by two over Beachie Abiera.

LONG POWER

Beermen topple Pals

GAME TODAY (Balanga, Bataan)
5:30 p.m.—FedEx vs Barangay Ginebra

By June Navarro

ART Long proved he was more than just an intimidating presence in the paint as the San Miguel import powered the Beermen to a 100-96 win over the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals last night in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Using his beefy 6-foot-7 frame to the hilt, Long outplayed Asi Taulava and Randy Holcomb in the shaded area all game long as the Beermen stole the solo leadership from the Phone Pals.

The Beermen improved to 3-0 while handing the Phone Pals their first defeat in four games.

"Art showed tremendous discipline on the court. He's the strength of the team and he kept us together in tough moments," said San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico.

Long, who had 18 points and 10 rebounds to backstop Dorian Peña's 19 markers and 12 rebounds, made the defensive stops that slowed down Taulava and Holcomb in the final half.

Failing to throw his weight around in the paint, Taulava brought his game to the three-point area and canned four triples to finish with 20 points. Holcomb was also stymied on several occasions but still managed 24 points.

Danny Ildefonso also sparkled by pumping in nine of his 18 points in the fourth quarter while Danny Seigle pitched in some quality minutes for the ailing Dondon Hontiveros and also finished with 18.

It was Ildefonso's slam dunk against Taulava that broke the Phone Pals' momentum, putting the Beermen beyond reach, 95-89, with 32 ticks remaining.

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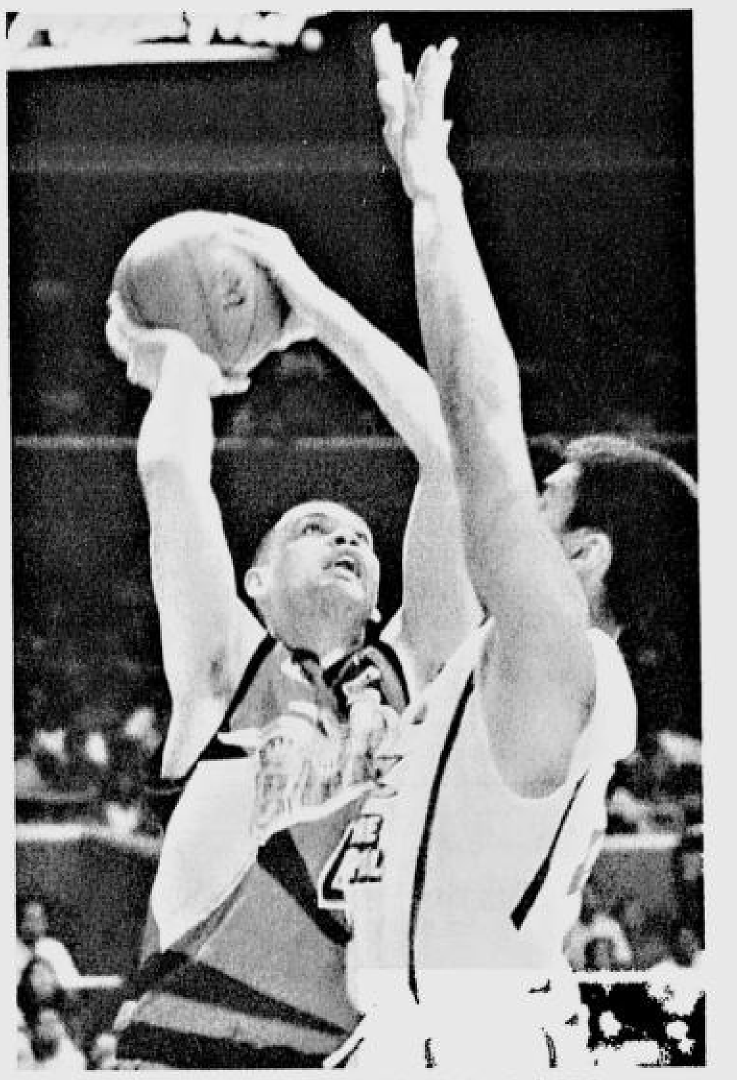

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Before teeing off, the governor smiled broadly before a large, appreciative crowd that included, among others, Glo Domingo of Southwoods, Aloma Lopez, Ellen Chua and Menchie Millonado of Wack Wack, Beth Menchavez and Hilda Badong of Riviera, Medy Agustin of The Orchard, jeweler Maria Brumann of Alabang, Maita Lustre, Gabby Monfort and Jocelyn Garcia of Marapara, and Boy Piccio and Jay Montelibano of Bacolod Golf & Country Club.

Oh, yes, Jay. Jay, the Australian wife of the former governor, has been acting out her role since Monday as host to 81 ladies from 17 clubs nationwide in superb fashion.

"If not for Jay, we would not be enjoying another great week of golf and the usual hospitality accorded us consistently whenever we come to Bacolod," said Alice Andrada, who has been the Southern Ladies' mother hen for 18 uninterrupted years now.

The tournament, born in 1963 in Cebu City, had a dramatic moment on Tuesday when Wack Wack's Leana Farrales scored a hole-in-one at the scenic par-3 18th with her mother, Vicky, watching.

"The ball hit the green, bounced once and disappeared into the hole," said Jay Montelibano, who was in the clubhouse watching the mother-and-daughter tandem tee off on 18.

In scoring her ace at the 165-yard hole of the Bacolod Golf & Country Club, the petite Leana used what she called a "Mizuno Rescue Club" that has a loft of 22 degrees.

It would have won Leana a brand-new Mizuno set had she did the trick during the tournament ending tomorrow.

"It was a thrill indeed but, unfortunately, there was no prize. But that's OK," said Leana, who scored her first hole-in-one in 1994 at Evercrest in Tagaytay City in a pre-tournament event of the Johnnie Walker Classic.

But if I know Jay Montelibano, she would not let Leana's feat go unrecognized, if not un-rewarded.

For starters, how about gifting Leana a crate of your delicious guavas, Jay?

Every ladies choice will make a difference.

***

FASTBREAK. Golf bridges friendships. After renewing my ties with Joe Cajili, Bacolod's chicken king, I got the bonus of meeting again great guys like inventor Ramon Uy and PAL's Job Lamela and gaining new friends in Oca Hernandez and Dr. Ed Ordonez. Cheers to you guys, especially, the good doctor, who was a great host on Tuesday.

Pascual, Brodette sparkle in Piata Cup

THEODY Pascual and Philip Brodette captured the low net and low gross titles, respectively, in the inaugural staging of the Piata Golf Cup presented by Thai Airways International recently at Sta. Elena Golf Club in Cabuyao, Laguna.

Pascual tallied a System 36 net score of 69 to claim the low net plum while Brodette submitted a gross of 78 to top a big field of 175 players in the event organized by the Philippine IATA Association of Travel Agents (Piata).

Topping their respective divisions were Mario Naval in Class A, Ed Mapa in Class B, Fernando Piedad in Class C and Carina Ricamonte in the ladies division. Rey Agustin and Trina Francisco won the nearest-the-pin contests sponsored by American Express.

DHL Philippines, Philippine Airlines, Royal Caribbean International and Smart Communications were the major sponsors of the tourney which was organized by a committee headed by Frank Khouri and Vicky Gonzales.

Hole sponsors were Abacus, ABCI (Gatorade), Amadeus, American Express, British Telecom, Deutsche Bank, Galileo, GG&A, Gourmet Farms Inc., Ice Vodka Bar, Kuoni Travel Ltd., Marsman Drysdale Foods, Metrobank, Montemar Beach Club, Pacsports, Philcomsat Holdings, Prudential Life, Singapore Tourism Board, Suarez & Sons, Teledata, Trends & Technologies.

Cathay Pacific, Cebu Pacific, China Airlines, Continental Airlines, Japan Airlines, Kenya Air, KLM, Lufthansa, Northwest Airlines, Qantas, Qatar Airways and Trafalgar Tours, meanwhile, donated tickets to various destinations abroad that were raffled off.

Naval beat Glenn Franisco by one with a 69, Mapa scored a 72 then nipped Ed Garcia in the countback while Piedad's 73 gave him a three-stroke win over Mandy Miole. Ricamonte, scoring a 69, won by two over Beachie Abiera.

SEAG training to cost ₱350M

By Marc Anthony Reyes

NO LESS than P350 million is needed to turn the 500 athletes in the national pool into gold medal forms for next year's Southeast Asian Games.

The Philippine Sports Commission announced this yesterday even as chair Eric Buhain said the agency is ready to begin its end of the bargain with regard to the 2005 SEAG hosting in Metro Manila.

This time, the Philippine Olympic Committee has agreed to take care of all expenses on the organizational side while leaving the PSC with the responsibility of training the national bets and preparing the SEAG venues.

Buhain also asked the POC to provide the agency with a list of the government or PSC-controlled facilities that will be used for the SEAG so it can make the necessary arrangement for renovating them.

"I believe it's time to move on because we only have less than two years to prepare," Buhain told the INQUIRER. "The government is ready to help anytime up to the very last day of the SEA Games."

"All efforts now will be focused on ensuring the success of the SEA Games," said Buhain.

The PSC has earmarked the P350 million to be spent primarily for sending the athletes abroad for exposure in the next 20 months leading to the Games.

The concentration of training will be on what the agency calls the"Golden 500" who will remain in the national pool after the current list of 1,000 is reduced by half.

Buhain, who declined to make any comment on its strained relations with the POC, had earlier estimated the cost of construction and renovation of facilities at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex to be around P200 million.

That includes the resurfacing of the RMSC oval, putting up an additional roof and purchasing a brand-new electronic timing device.

The PSC also plans to build a P100-million new aquatic center at the reclamation area.

Pacquiao battles . . .

From page A21

row (March 12) or on March 15.

Pacquiao, now the reigning consensus featherweight king, will tangle with reigning WBA/IBF champion Marquez at a soon-to-be-announced venue in the United States, some two weeks earlier than the original schedule.

HBO, the cable giant which owns an exclusive contract with the Filipino ring hero for a two-fight deal, scratched the May 22 playdate and instead gave it to WBC lightweight king Floyd Mayweather Jr., who is having a more difficult time looking for an opponent.

"The determining factor on this decision was mainly HBO's eagerness to have Pacquiao fully ready and prepared for what could be the year's best fight against newly crowned WBC super featherweight champion Erik Morales," according to an HBO press release.

The plan is to hold the Pacquiao-Morales fight sometime in late July or early August 2004, and organizers felt that if Pacquiao fights Marquez on May 22, the Filipino would most likely be unavailable to fight by July or August.

Reportedly, smooth negotiations transpired the other day between Pacquiao's American promoter Murad Muhammad and his counterpart Bob Arum, who promotes Marquez.

Pacquiao has been assured of a $1-million purse in challenging Marquez, who had hedged on meeting the Filipino unless he gets the same paycheck as his rival. Whether he got his wish was not mentioned in the press release.

PACQUIAO flashes the thumbs-up sign with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo after receiving the Ring Magazine championship belt yesterday in Malacañang. EPA/ROLEX DELA PENA

John Hay Invt'l March 19-20

THE SECOND Camp John Hay Invitational golf tournament gets under way March 19-20 in Baguio City.

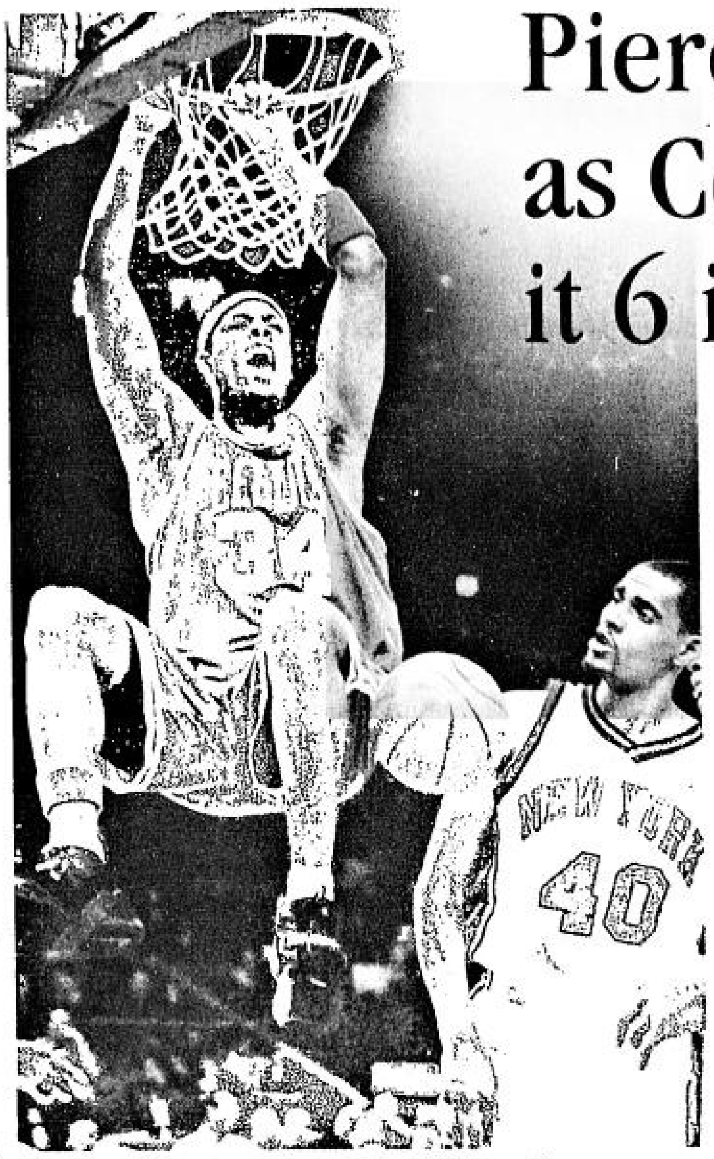
The 36-hole tourney where members get to pair with their invited guest partners will be using two different formats for both days with teams playing scramble in the first round and best-ball in the other round.

Exciting prizes await the winners of the tourney that kicks off the series of summer events at the world-class John Hay facility. Each of the expected 144 entries will receive a signature golf bag as a giveaway.

Making up the sponsors are Smart Communications, Camp John Hay Golf Club, Camp John Hay Manor Hote, Le Chef at the Manor, Kork Inc. F&B Systems&Services, Filling Station: Hotshots&Figaro Coffee, Federal Management and Maintenance Inc. and Golforce.

The club's board of directors headed by chair Robert John Sobrepeña will be showing up in full force for the event. The other board members are lawyer Enrique Sobrepeña Jr., Noel Cariño, lawyer Ferdinand Santos, engineer Francisco Gonzalez, Rafael Perez de Tagle, architect Ruben Payumo, Alfredo Mendoza and lawyer Rafael Evangelista.

Comm. Benigno Cabrieto, chief operating officer of CJH Development Corp., and Shean Bedi, SVP for Marketing and Sales of CJHDC, are also in the field. Entry fee is P4,000.



PIERCE finishes off a dunk against New York's Kurt Thomas. EPA

Pierce shines as Celts make it 6 in a row

NEW YORK—The Boston Celtics have their longest winning streak of the season thanks to a long—and difficult—jump shot by Paul Pierce.

The Celtics' All-Star scored 23 points, including an off-balance jumper as the shot clock expired with 24 seconds left, to give the Celtics a six-game winning streak with an 87-84 victory Tuesday night over the New York Knicks.

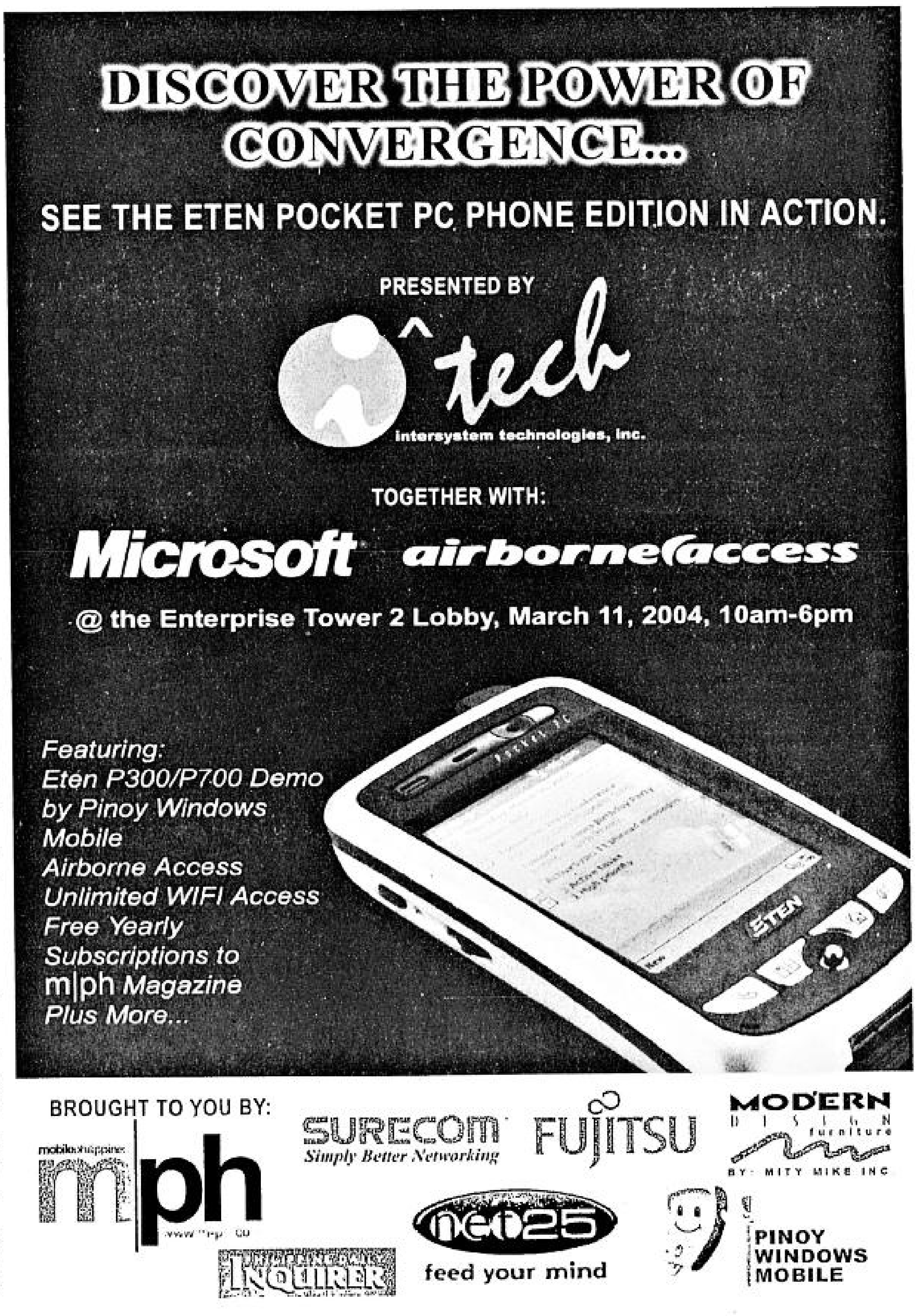
Pierce's shot from the left corner gave Boston an 85-82 lead.

After trailing most of the game, the Knicks took their first lead since the first quarter when Allan Houston's jumper made it 74-72 with 6:53 left.

"I made a tough shot, but a number of guys really carried us in the fourth and I just tried to do the little things that kept us in the game," Pierce said.

Tim Thomas' 3-pointer with 3:26 gave the Knicks an 81-78 lead, but a free throw by Pierce and two by Mark Blount tied the game. The Celtics then took the lead for good when Blount's dunk with 1:06 left made it 83-81. *AP*

Complete results: Denver 117, Washington 87 ; Miami 100, Orlando 89; Boston 87, New York 84; Indiana 94, Toronto 84 (ot); Memphis 94, San Antonio 88; Philadelphia 89, Chicago 81; Houston 90, LA Clippers 85; Minnesota 105, Seattle 92; Sacramento 96, Golden State 92 .



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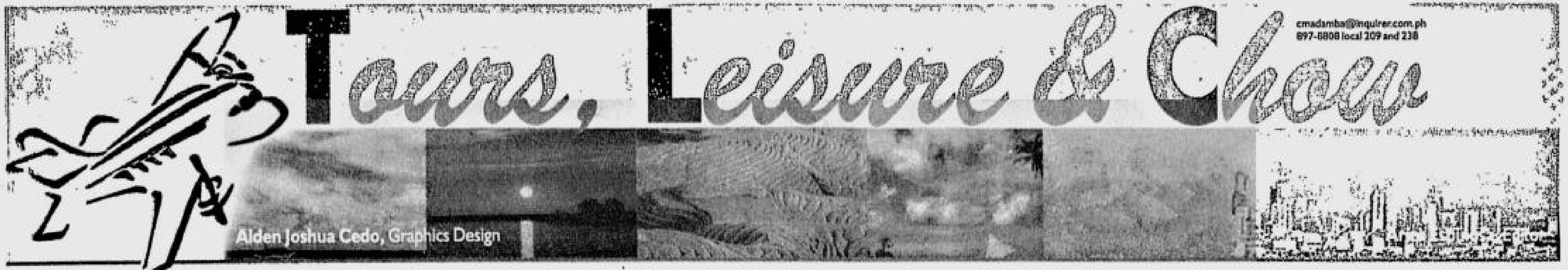
Tours, Leisure & Chow
Alden Joshua Cedo, Graphics Design

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Waterfront Cebu City Hotel and Casino's March specials

THIS MARCH, enjoy the most sumptuous of tasteful treats at Waterfront Cebu City Hotel and Casino.

Conquer the world with cake of the month La Vida Mocha, a special spiced butter sponge cake generously filled with creamy chocolate custard and hazelnuts, and covered with mocha orange butter cream. Only P900 net for the whole cake and P90 net per petit gateau. Available from March 1 to 31, at the Lobby Lounge and Madeleine.

Relax, unwind and enjoy the gentle winds with cocktail of the month, Caribbean Breeze, made with Gilbey's and Malibu Rhum drizzled with sugar syrup, a splash of blue curacao and a refreshing helping of diced pineapples. For only P180 net per glass and P300 net per glass for room service only. Available from March 1 to 31, in all restaurants and bars.

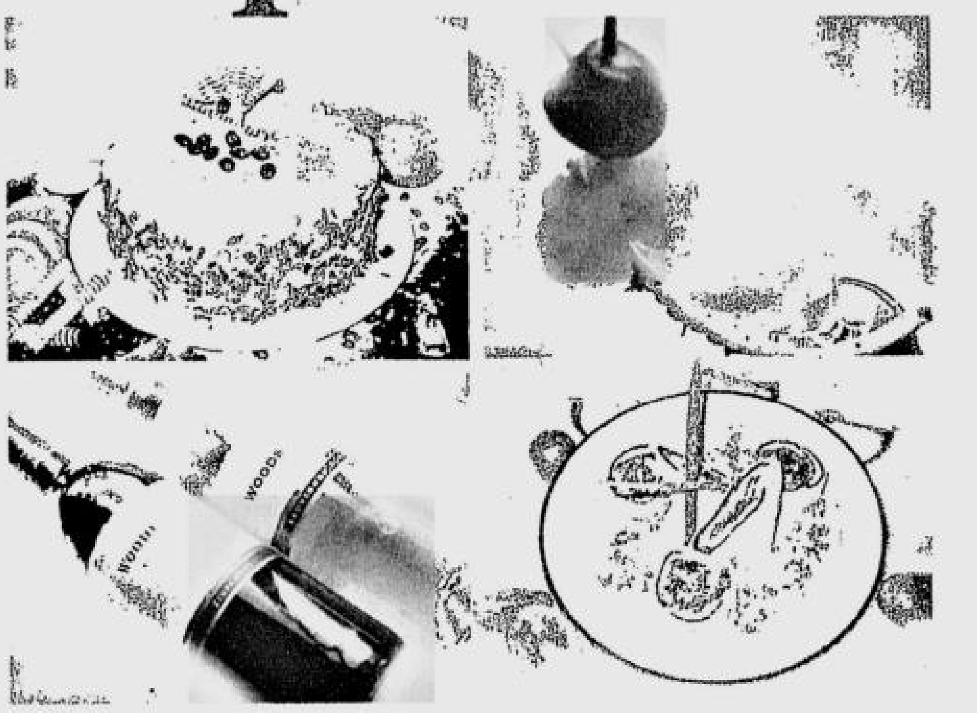
For the hotel's wines of the month, there is Woodbridge Zinfandel (California, Red wine)-a velvety, soft wine with rich, aromatic bramble berry and black raspberry flavors for P1,200 net per bottle and P200 net per glass, and Woodbridge Sauvignon Blanc (White wine)-a balanced, dry white wine aged in oak barrels with light oak undertones for P1,200 net per bottle and P200 net per glass.

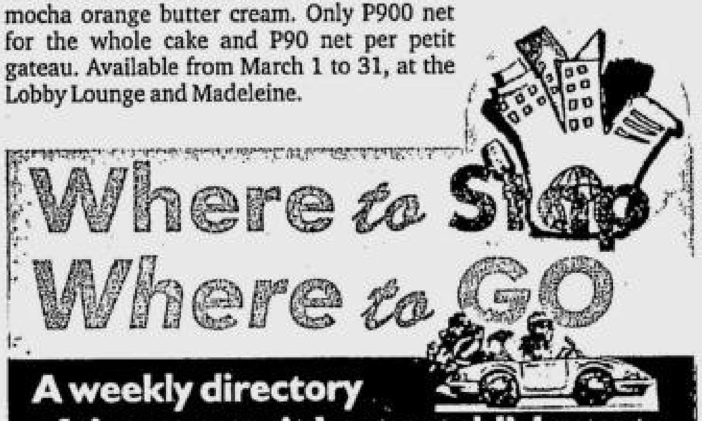
Furthermore, there is the hotel's lobby lounge delights, namely: Nems Station where you can savor authentic Vietnamese spring rolls daily from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at P300 net per person; Italian Crab Cakes, a delight of pan-fried basil pesto flavoured crab patties in focacia buns, sprinkled with chili garlic aioli for P120 net per order; and Pastrami Rolls to satisfy mid-day cravings with its tasty beef pastrami, zesty tomato and cream cheese in a tortilla roll. Only P120 net per order.

Waterfront Hotels & Casinos manages the 562-room Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino in Lahug, Cebu City; the 167-room Waterfront Airport Hotel Mactan & Casino in Mactan Island, Cebu; and the 157-room Waterfront Insular Hotel Davao in Lanang, Davao City.

For inquiries, contact 687-0888 or visit www.waterfronthotels.net.

Conquer the world with cake of the month La Vida Mocha, a special spiced butter sponge cake generously filled with creamy chocolate custard and hazelnuts





Where to Stop Where to GO

A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

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Tel. 813-8888/ Fax 813-5499
www.shangri-la.com

Dusit Hotel Nikko
Ayala Center, 1223 Makati City Phil.
Tel. 867-3333 Email: dusitmnl@dusit.com
http://manila.dusit.com

Barcelo Hotels and Resorts
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www.barcelo-asia.com

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Mandarin Oriental Manila
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www.mandarinoriental.com

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www.thebellevue.com.ph

Waterfront Hotel Lahug
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Waterfront Hotel Mactan
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Tastes of the World at The Bellevue Hotel

TAKE a trip around the globe with The Bellevue Hotel's generous Taste of the World dinner buffets. The Bellevue Hotel offers these reasonably priced gourmet treats for executives-on-the-go and ladies with discriminate palates.

On Mondays, savor Spanish delights such as Paella Valenciana and Salmons con salsa de anchoas; Tuesdays with Asian surprises such as Kare-kare and Pork Piña Hamonado; Wednesdays with Italian specialties such as Risotto con scampi and Spaghetti vongole; Thursdays with Japanese cravings such as Simmered Lapu-lapu fillet with shiitake and Tonkatsu; Fridays with Seafood indulgences such as Sautéed curry prawns in coconut milk and Stir-fried mussels, Saturdays and Sundays with an international selection such as Roasted chicken with orange butter sauce and bean curd ma-po style.

Aside from these hot main selections, the feast also comes with salads, a cold selection, breads, soup, a cooking station, a carving station and an assortment of desserts. The affordable P520+ dinner buffet is only part of the hotel's flavorful and inventive food offerings. Experience distinctive living at The Bellevue. For inquiries, call 771-8181.

This March at Fiesta San Miguel

CATCH Nyoy Volante and Mannos at Dusit Hotel Nikko's Fiesta San Miguel on March 16 at 8 p.m. They will serenade diners with their popular songs like "Nasaan", "What Do I Do", "You Are My You" and more others during this special one-night engagement dubbed "An Ecstatic Acoustic Night with Nyoy Volante and Mannos"

"An Ecstatic Acoustic Night with Nyoy Volante and Mannos" is the second in a series of monthly special shows at Fiesta San Miguel. Cover charge is P500 inclusive of one round of standard drink. For queries and reservations, call 867-3333 extension 3308.

Also this March at Fiesta San Miguel, jam with some of the country's top bands: Elaine Tadena with Route'70 on Mondays; Prime Council back-to-back with Mocha and Spinart on Tuesdays; Mulatto back-to-back with Acoustic Jive every Wednesday; Thursdays with Freeverse and Pido with Take One; Fridays with Ntwine back-to-back with George; and Ecoustic Soul back-to-back with Fat Session every Saturday.

ASTORIA PLAZA'S DRINK OF THE MONTH

Currently a hit and being served at Café Astoria is Creamsicle Margarita, a fine blend of Tequila Gold, Vanilla ice cream, orange juice, curacao and a jig of calamansi juice. Creamsicle Margarita is available at Astoria Plaza's coffee shop for the whole months of March and April and comes with a cute, cuddly Teddy Bear.

Jose Cuervo Especial

Executive Plaza Hotel's Graduation Package

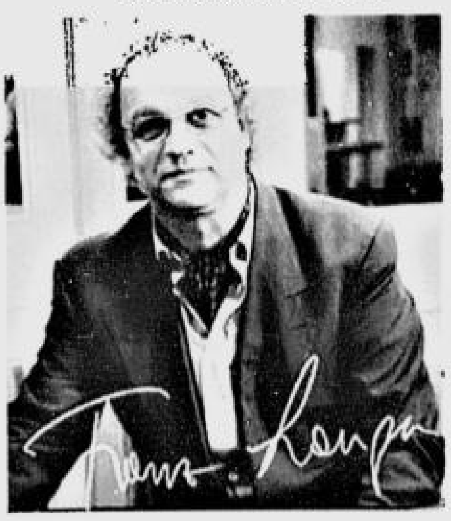
EXECUTIVE Plaza Hotel salutes the graduates of 2004. Situated at 1630 A. Mabini Street, Malate, Manila, the hotel offers graduates special blow-out packages for only P1,400 net (double or twin occupancy). For inquiries and reservations, you may visit or call the sales office at 523-1000 or 525-8969. You may also fax 525-8979. For more information, email sales@executiveplazahotel.com or log on to www.executiveplazahotel.com

Austrian Pianist at limited engagement in Bocarinos

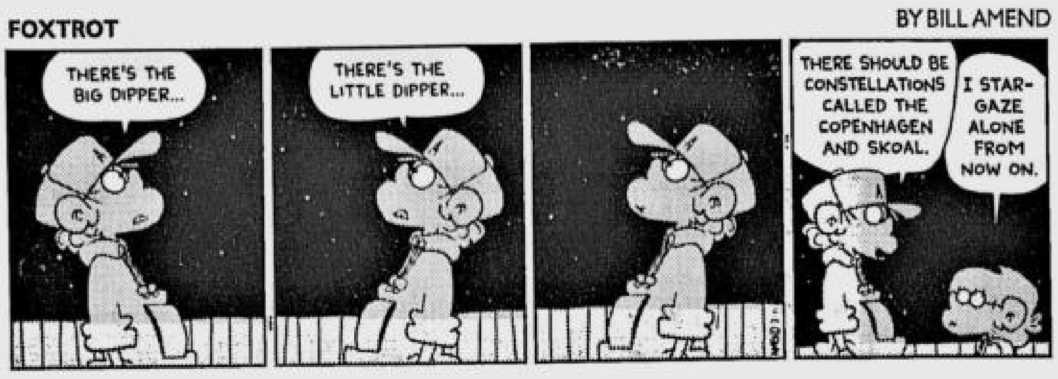
AUSTRIAN pianist Franz Langer performs at a limited engagement in New World Renaissance Hotel's creative continental restaurant Bocarinos on March 12 to 26 nightly (except Sundays) from 7 to 9:30 p.m. The great keyboard artist performs a wide range of musical selections from the classics to broadway tunes, to all-time favorite pop hits. His repertoire perfectly complements the stylish restaurant's cuisine and ambience promising a memorable dinner experience.

Langer is most famous for his "Sound of Music Show" of which he is founder and musical director. It is a "must-see" in Salzburg since 1991. Moreover, he has performed in many parts of the world including China, India, and the U.S.

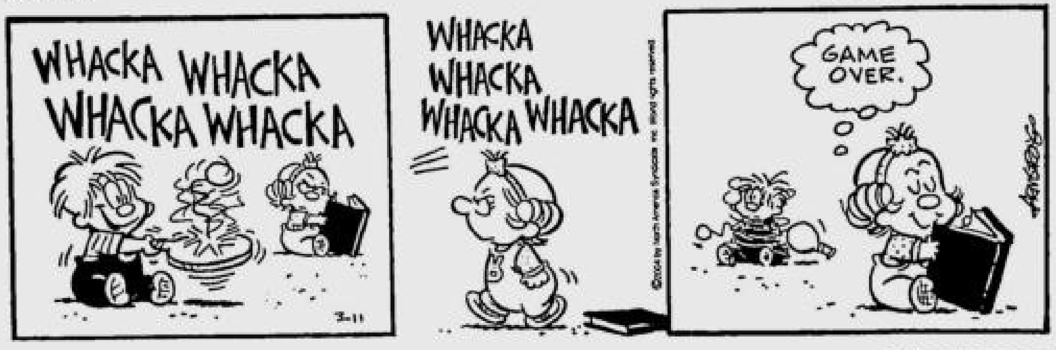
For more information and reservations, please call 811 6888.



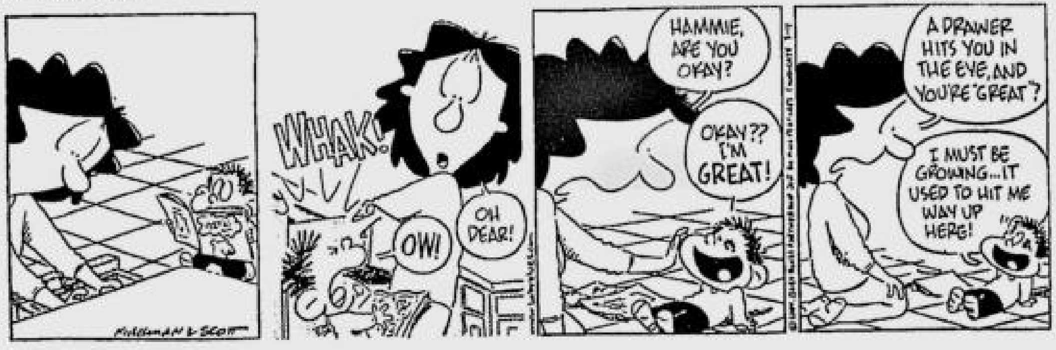
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


THERE'S THE BIG DIPPER...
THERE'S THE LITTLE DIPPER...
THERE SHOULD BE CONSTELLATIONS CALLED THE COPENHAGEN AND SKOAL.
I STAR-GAZE ALONE FROM NOW ON.

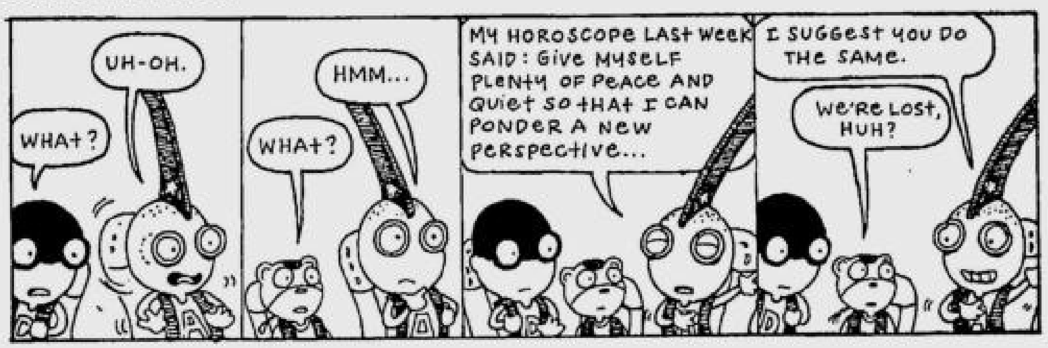
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


WHACKA WHACKA WHACKA WHACKA
WHACKA WHACKA WHACKA WHACKA
GAME OVER.
3-11

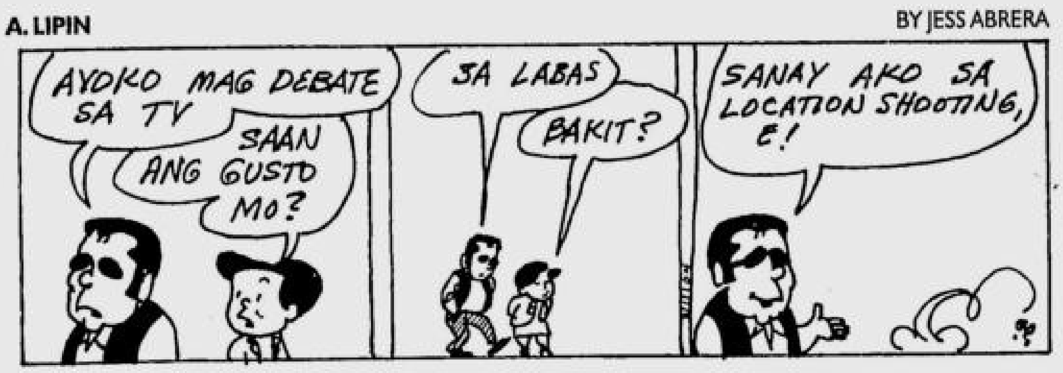
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


WHAK!
OW!
OH DEAR!
HAMMIE, ARE YOU OKAY?
OKAY?? I'M GREAT!
A DRAWER HITS YOU IN THE EYE, AND YOU'RE "GREAT"?
I MUST BE GROWING...IT USED TO HIT ME WAY UP HERE!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

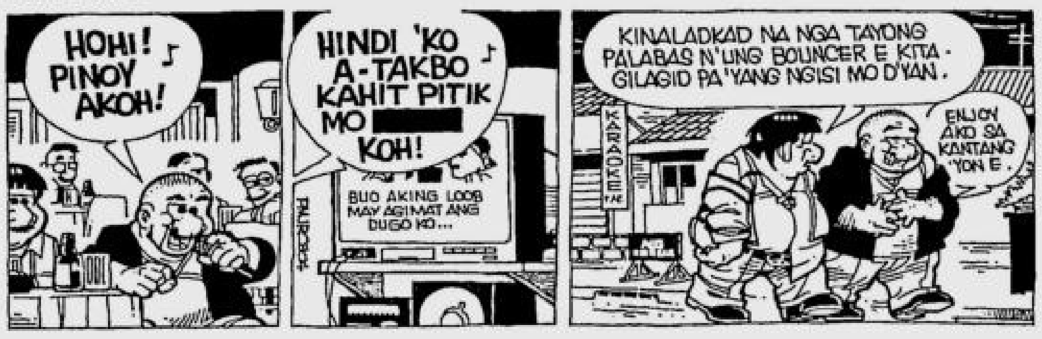
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


UH-OH.
WHAT?
HMM...
WHAT?
MY HOROSCOPE LAST WEEK SAID: GIVE MYSELF PLENTY OF PEACE AND QUIET SO THAT I CAN PONDER A NEW PERSPECTIVE...
I SUGGEST YOU DO THE SAME.
WE'RE LOST, HUH?

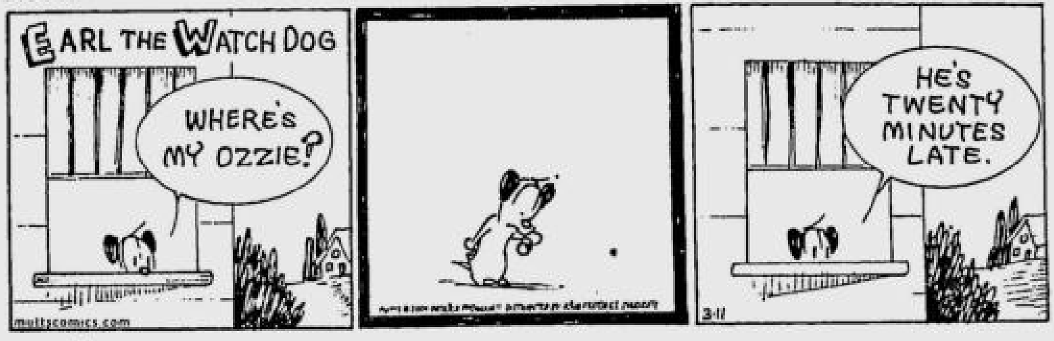
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


AYOKO MAG DEBATE SA TV
SAAN ANG GUSTO MO?
SA LABAS
BAKIT?
SANAY AKO SA LOCATION SHOOTING, E!

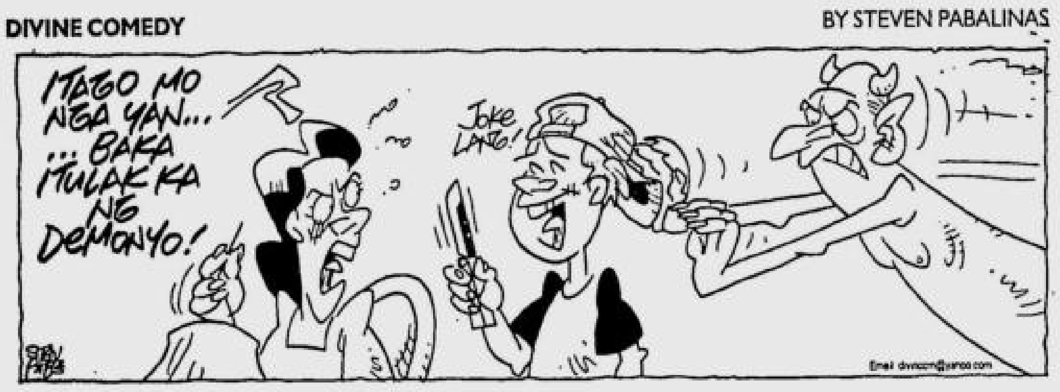
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


HOHI! PINOY AKOH!
HINDI 'KO A-TAKBO KAHIT PITIK MO [redacted] KOH!
BUO AKING LOOB MAY AGIMAT ANG DUGO KO...
KINALADKAD NA NGA TAYONG PALABAS N'UNG BOUNCER E KITA-GILAGID PA 'YANG NGISI MO D'YAN.
ENJOY AKO SA KANTANG 'YON E.
KARAOKE

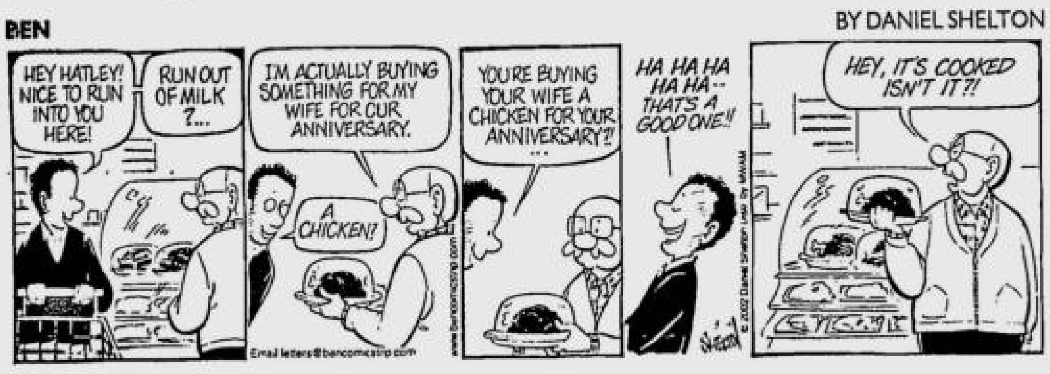
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


EARL THE WATCH DOG
WHERE'S MY OZZIE?
HE'S TWENTY MINUTES LATE.
muttscomics.com
3-11

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ITAGO MO NGA YAN... ...BAKA ITULAK KA NG DEMONYO!
JOKE LANG!
Email divncom@yahoo.com

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


HEY HATLEY! NICE TO RUN INTO YOU HERE!
RUN OUT OF MILK ?...
I'M ACTUALLY BUYING SOMETHING FOR MY WIFE FOR OUR ANNIVERSARY.
A CHICKEN!
YOU'RE BUYING YOUR WIFE A CHICKEN FOR YOUR ANNIVERSARY?! ...
HA HA HA HA HA-- THAT'S A GOOD ONE!!
HEY, IT'S COOKED ISN'T IT?!
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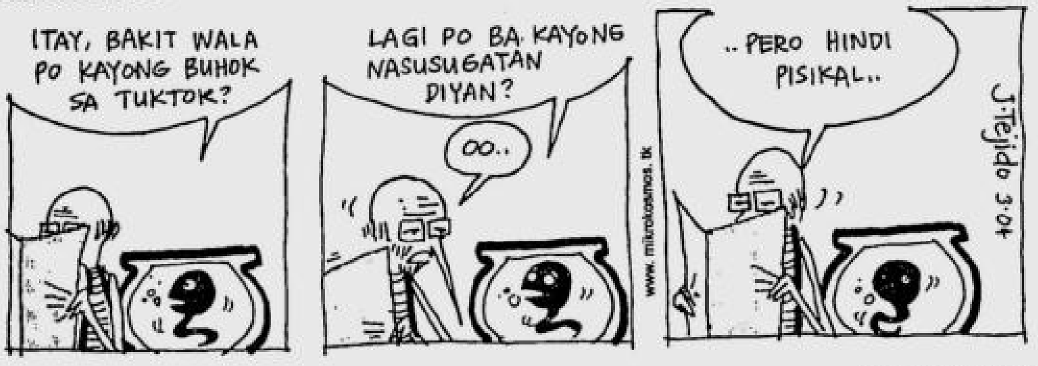
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ITAY, BAKIT WALA PO KAYONG BUHOK SA TUKTOK?
LAGI PO BA KAYONG NASUSUGATAN DIYAN?
OO..
..PERO HINDI PISIKAL..
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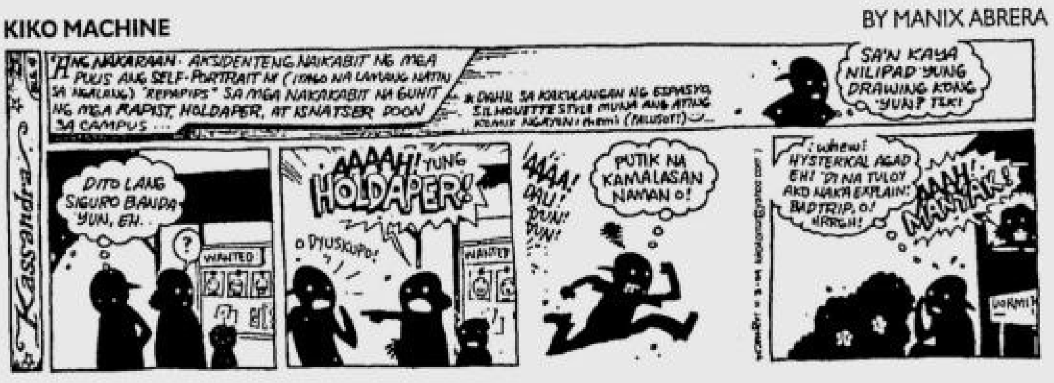
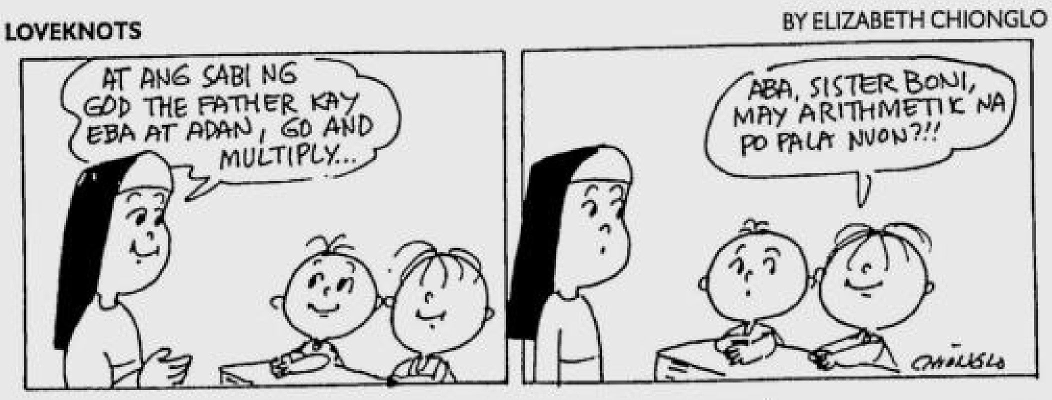
J.Tejido 3.04

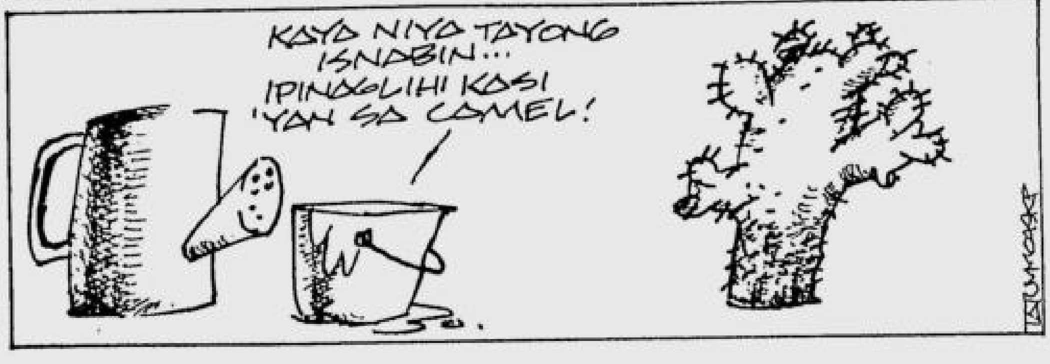
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


ANG NAKARAAN: AKSIDENTENG NAIKABIT NG MGA PULIS ANG SELF-PORTRAIT NI (ITAGO NA LAMANG NATIN SA NGALANG) "REPAPIPS" SA MGA NAKAKABIT NA GUHIT NG MGA RAPIST, HOLDAPER, AT ISNATSER DOON SA CAMPUS ...
DAHIL SA KAKULANGAN NG ESPASYO, SILHOUETTE STYLE MUNA ANG ATING KOMIK NGAYON (PALUSOT!)
SA'N KAYA NILIPAD YUNG DRAWING KONG 'YUN? TSK!
Kassandra
DITO LANG SIGURO BANDA YUN, EH.
WANTED
AAAAH! YUNG HOLDAPER!
O DYUSKUPO!
AAAA! DAU! DUN! YUN!
PUTIK NA KAMALASAN NAMAN O!
¡WHEW! HYSTERICAL AGAD EH! 'DI NA TULOY AKO NAKA EXPLAIN! BADTRIP, O! ARRGH!
AAAH! MANYAK!
DORMITORY

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


AT ANG SABI NG GOD THE FATHER KAY EBA AT ADAN, GO AND MULTIPLY...
ABA, SISTER BONI, MAY ARITHMETIK NA PO PALA NUON?!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


KAYA NIYA TAYONG ISNABIN... IPINAGLIHI KASI 'YAN SA CAMEL!
TATUM

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a fine mind. You also have a shrewd, bizarre sense of humor. You're modern and progressive in your thinking. Professionally, you can be quite competitive, but privately you are gentle and full of fantasy. Always trust your intuition. The year ahead focuses on your closest partnerships and relationships. **Birthdate of:** Douglas Adams, writer; Bobby McFerrin, musician; Thora Birch, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You feel practical today. If you spend money, you want to buy something that will last a long time and give you a good value for your cash.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Discussions with others are quite serious today. You're ready to tackle the meat and potatoes of any situation. You don't mind wading through tedious details to get to the facts.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You're in a hard-working frame of mind today. You're prepared to forestall today's pleasures for tomorrow's rewards. You've decided you're in it for the long haul.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Don't hesitate to take advice from someone older or more experienced. People like this have much to offer. It's naive to think that their experience is not worth your respect.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): VIPs, bosses and important people are impressed with you today. They see you as sober, conscientious, reliable and trustworthy. Good. (It takes years to build a reputation and just seconds to destroy it.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Go ahead with long-range travel plans or future plans for your education. Matters related to publishing and the media are also worth serious consideration today.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're prepared to take your duties and obligations very seriously today. Because you're ready to do this, a gift with a long-term benefit might come your way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is the perfect day to sit down with a loved one and sort out serious matters. What do you expect from this relationship? Make sure you're both on the same page.

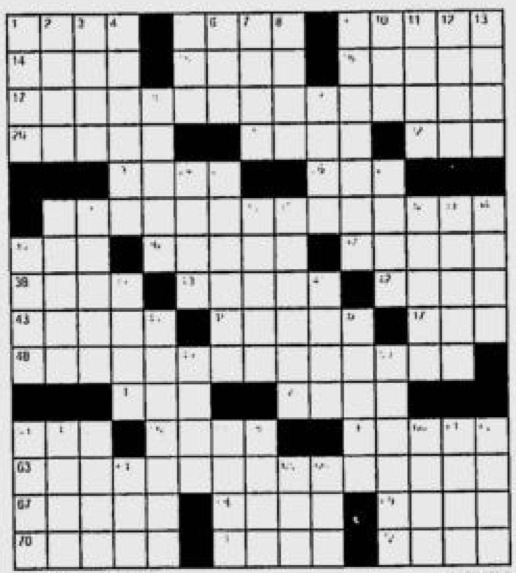
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You have to give serious consideration to whether or not to continue in your job. After all, time is the stuff life is made of. The question is: How are you spending your time?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You might develop a crush on someone older or a different age now. (Many Capricorns are involved with people of an age difference.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is good day to make repairs or stabilize your home situation in some way. Similarly, you might stabilize family relationships as well.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You have the discipline today to develop a skill or learn a new trade or task. Whether it's for a hobby, your pleasure or your work, you will do a fine job and get good results.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Robert H. Wolfe
North Woodmere, NY

3/11/04

ACROSS

1 Imprint clearly
5 Tiny bit of physics
9 Document stamps
14 Sector
15 Luau dance
16 Awards host
17 Fabric/metal factory?
20 Become established
21 Transported
22 Tree creature in "The Lord of the Rings"
23 Intervening space: abbr.
26 Comic Margaret
28 Fabric that flapped?
35 Rower
36 Brown tint
37 Gaucho's address
38 Bass-pitch brass instrument
40 Actress Annie
42 Rational
43 Total
45 Piece of trickery
47 At this time
48 Trade fabric to get support?
51 Crowd fig.
52 FDR's mother
53 Flagon filler
56 Wolf's wail
59 Hopping mad
63 Fabric for electrical safeguards?
67 Artist's model
68 __ vera
69 Black cuckoos
70 Places
71 Ratchet part
72 Stanton film, "__ Man"

DOWN

1 Has a meal
2 Loyal
3 Early Brit
4 Halogen compound
5 So that's it!
6 Large cask
7 Part of R.E.O.
8 Created
9 Is agitated
10 Print measures
11 Muscular stiffness
12 Bolshevik Trotsky
13 Cal. page
18 Bagnold and Blyton
19 Move along slowly
24 Spread slowly
25 Warning
27 Is in debt to
28 Finnish bath
29 Of the city
30 Explosive stuff
31 Mongolian horde
32 Vacuous
33 Forbidden acts
34 Comic Carey
35 Of the ear: suff.
39 Edison's middle name
41 Fiji's capital
44 Soaps up
46 Greek column
49 Halt
50 Tooth buildup
53 Small vipers
54 5th-century pope
55 Formerly, formerly
57 Rolled sandwich
58 Singer Falana
60 First-rate
61 Journey
62 Exxon, formerly
64 Golly!
65 Tug's task
66 Moray __

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

T	I	P	S	■	M	A	T	A	■	S	L	O	M	O
H	O	A	R	■	E	L	A	M	■	T	I	G	E	R
E	U	R	O	■	M	L	L	E	■	A	L	L	O	T
F	S	A	■	B	O	O	K	R	E	V	I	E	W	S
■	■	P	A	R	R	Y	■	■	L	E	E	■	■	■
A	S	H	L	E	Y	■	N	B	A	■	S	P	A	M
B	A	R	O	N	■	B	E	E	N	L	■	E	R	E
C	H	A	P	T	E	R	A	N	D	V	E	R	S	E
D	E	S	■	S	L	A	V	S	■	I	D	I	O	T
F	I	F	A	■	I	T	F	■	S	C	I	O	N	S
■	■	■	D	U	H	■	■	C	I	T	E	D	■	■
P	A	G	E	T	U	R	N	E	R	S	■	I	C	E
S	L	U	S	H	■	C	E	L	T	■	S	C	A	R
S	L	A	T	E	■	M	A	L	I	■	P	A	N	G
T	A	M	E	R	■	P	R	O	S	■	A	L	E	S

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3/11/04

Bleeding . . .

From page A28

a coffeemaker, choosing caffeine over cigarettes any time.

The actress has also been immersing herself into a new venture with her mother's help. She has launched "Rica's Deepest Secret Calamansi Whitening Soap," which has her face adorning the packaging.

Rica is particularly happy that this opportunity has allowed her to branch out. She is also pleased that Filipinos abroad are also eager to try out her new product.

"It's helping me de-stress in a way that I'm introduced to a new environment. I'm the type of person who gets bored easily. So whenever I talk to my partners and my doctors, I'm thankful that I can stay away from the intrigues of show biz even temporarily. It helps me think of other things to come up with, and be a better businesswoman," said Rica.

Driven, dedicated

Mom and manager Alice Peralejo described her daughter to have always been a driven and dedicated person who excelled in things she liked doing. She is confident that Rica's new business will eventually grow to include other beauty lines like lotions and colognes.

Mrs. Peralejo also hopes that the brand will be a trusted household name in the future: "I told her it would be great to see people buying her products in the store, and saying, 'Pagbilhan po ng Rica!'"

Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
Ali 2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
Ali 3	HIDALGO
Ali 4	GOTHIKA
Ali 5	LOVE ACTUALLY
Ali 6	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
Ali 7	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

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MAR 13	PBA: PUREFOODS VS. STA. LUCIA
MAR 14	PBA: GINEBRA VS. COKE
MAR 16	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
MAR 17	PBA: STA. LUCIA VS. TALK 'N' TEXT
MAR 18	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
MAR 21	PBA SAN MIGUEL VS PUREFOODS

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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SEX LEGEND OF [illegible]

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	LANGIT MO LIGAYA KO
B	
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	MILAN
CINEMA-2	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
CINEMA-3	DRAGON VS NINJA
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	CARMEN
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	KUYA
CINEMA-6	U-BELT
CINEMA-7	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-8	ANNIE B
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	TORQUE
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HIDALGO
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
CINEMA-12	LOVE ACTUALLY
CINEMA-14	GOTHIKA
CINEMA-15	GRUDGE 2

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PIÑAS)	[illegible]
CINEMA-1	ANNIE B
CINEMA-2	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-4	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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CINEMA 1	HIDALGO	11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00	P13
CINEMA 2	LOVE ACTUALLY	11:05, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 10:00	R18

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MAR 17 & 18	"WILLIE NEP 4 PRESIDENT"	9:00PM

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1	HIDALGO	11:40, 2:30, 5:20 8:10, 11:00	PG-13
2	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN	11:00, 1:10, 3:20 5:30, 7:40, 9:50	GP
3	LOVE ACTUALLY	11:40, 2:30, 5:20 8:10, 11:00	R-18
4	GOTHIKA	11:15, 1:30, 3:50 6:10, 8:30, 10:50	R-13

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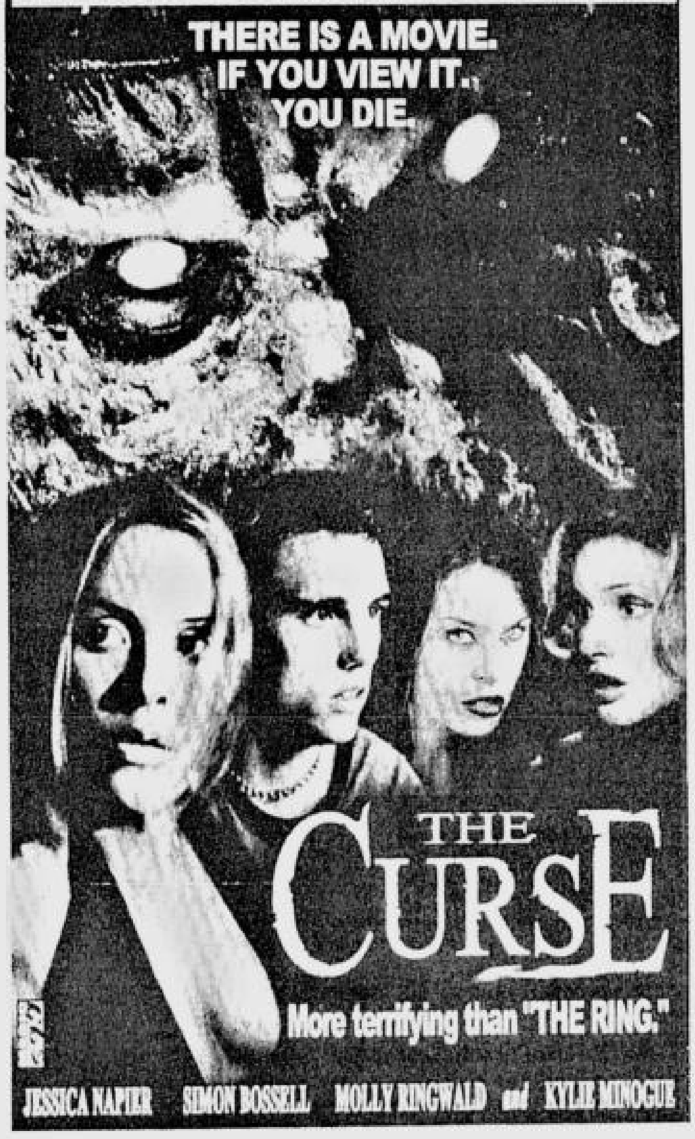

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CINEMA 1 THX

Cinema	Movie	Times
1	GOTHIKA	12:25, 2:40, 5:00, 7:20, 9:40
2	THE GRUDGE 2	12:30, 2:35, 4:40, 6:50, 9:00
3	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN	10:50, 1:00, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, 9:45
4	CARMEN	10:40, 1:10, 3:40, 6:20, 9:00
5	HIDALGO	10:20, 1:10, 4:00, 6:50, 9:40
6	LOVE ACTUALLY	10:20, 1:10, 4:00, 6:50, 9:40
7	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO	11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50
8	TORQUE	10:50, 1:00, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, 9:45
9	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE	12:40, 3:20, 6:10, 9:00
10	COLD MOUNTAIN	12:10, 3:00, 6:00, 9:00

MATINEE: Monday to Friday/ 10 am-4pm except holidays
Matinee Price: P100 THX cinema / P80 for one level cinemas
Regular Price: P130 THX / P95/65 for two levels cinemas / P95 for one level cinemas

ERMITA

526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12

DOLBY DIGITAL EX

Cinema	Movie	Times
1	HIDALGO	11:00, 1:35, 4:10, 6:45, 9:40
2	THE GRUDGE 2	11:10, 1:00, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, 10:00
3	GOTHIKA	11:35, 1:45, 3:55, 6:05, 8:10, 10:00
4	CARMEN	11:30, 1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10, 10:00
5	TORQUE	11:00, 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:40
6	LOVE ACTUALLY	11:50, 2:30, 5:10, 7:40, 10:00
7	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN	10:35, 12:45, 2:55, 5:05, 7:15, 9:40

Big R Supercenter METRO EAST

682-8193/99 / 682-8280

Cinema	Movie	Times
1	LOVE ACTUALLY	12:30, 3:20, 6:10, 9:00
2	GOTHIKA	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00
3	TORQUE	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00
4	HIDALGO	12:30, 3:20, 6:10, 9:00
5	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00
6	THE GRUDGE 2	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00
7	CARMEN	11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50
8	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO	11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00

Big R Supercenter NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW

935-3229 / 31

Cinema	Movie	Times
1	THE GRUDGE 2	11:25, 1:15, 3:05, 4:55, 6:45, 8:35
2	GOTHIKA	11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30
3	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN	11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30
4	ANNIE B.	12:05, 2:10, 4:15, 6:20, 8:30
5	HIDALGO	10:40, 12:05, 2:50, 5:35, 8:30
6	TORQUE	11:25, 1:15, 3:05, 4:55, 6:45, 8:35
7	LOVE ACTUALLY	10:40, 12:05, 2:50, 5:35, 8:30
8	CARMEN	11:50, 2:15, 4:40, 7:05, 9:00

Citisquare MALABON

288-0985/2575

1	HIDALGO
2	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
3	ANNIE B.
4	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO

big Supercenter CAINTA

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1	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
2	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
3	CARMEN
4	HIDALGO

Big R Supercenter STA. ROSA

Laguna (049)837-0907

1	TORQUE
2	GOTHIKA
3	DUPLEX
4	ANNIE B.
5	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

Big R Supercenter LIPA

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1	TORQUE
2	ANNIE B.
3	DRAGON VS. NINJA
4	GHOST HOUSE
5	DUPLEX

Big R Supercenter DASMARIÑAS

852-2125

1	DRAGON VS. NINJA
2	WATER DEMON
3	TORQUE
4	DUPLEX
5	ANNIE B.

Big R Supercenter STARMILLS

875-1927 / 961-5270

1	BONE SNATCHER
2	U-BELT
3	WATER DEMON
4	GHOST HOUSE
5	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
6	GOTHIKA

IMUS

471-8188 / 875-5858

1	TORQUE
2	HIDALGO
3	LOVE ACTUALLY
4	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
5	GOTHIKA
6	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO

BACOLOD

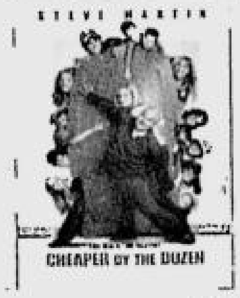
441-0458/59

1	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
2	COLD MOUNTAIN
3	ANNIE B.
4	MAGIC KITCHEN
5	WISHING STAIRS
6	U-BELT

ILOILO

336-8070/78

1	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2	COLD MOUNTAIN
3	ANNIE B.
4	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
5	WISHING STAIRS
6	GHOST HOUSE



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Penelope Cruz treasures her friends, privacy

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
LA correspondent

LOS ANGELES—Dressed in a white Dolce & Gabbana pantsuit with a long-sleeved, plunging neckline top, Penelope Cruz is extra stunning.

She could make some ramp models insecure. But it's easy to see why she's dubbed as the European sexpot, the young Sofia Loren, the "Madonna of Madrid," or the "Spanish enchantress." It's also not surprising that she easily made her leading men—Matt Damon, Johnny Depp ("Blow"), Nicolas Cage ("Captain Corelli's Mandolin") and Tom Cruise ("Vanilla Sky")—fall in love with her.

But Cruz, 29, will not talk of Cruise or of her 2-year-old relationship with him because "every time I talk about my personal life, it becomes the headline of the story, and it makes me so angry."

"I don't like to talk about my personal life because I want to protect the people I love and my family. You just have to choose what you want to talk about," says the Madrid-born actress.

Her humble beginnings as the daughter of a merchant father and a hairdresser mother have inspired her to be active in social causes. After spending a week in Calcutta, India, she donated her entire salary for the film "Hi-Lo Country" to the Mother Teresa children's sanctuary there. She has set up a home, a school, and a clinic for the homeless girls and those suffering from tuberculosis in Calcutta, and has volunteered in Uganda for two months.

Nothing like it

The actress, who was introduced to American audiences in the Spanish films 'Jamon, Jamon" and "Belle Epoque," portrays the role of Chloe Sava, the dangerously disturbed psychiatric patient of Dr. Miranda Grey (Halle Berry), in the suspense-drama-thriller "Gothika." She admits to loving the role.

"I have done nothing like it before and I find it really challenging," she explains. "I don't care how many minutes I am on screen. I thought it was a different kind of movie and I have always wanted to work with Halle."

She idolizes Berry so much, and reveals that "I saw her in 'Monster's Ball' and I thought her performance was one of the best performances I have ever seen in my entire life. I have so much admiration for her."

The role of the demented but charismatic murderess, Chloe, was specially written by screenwriter, Sebastian Gutierrez ("The Big Bounce," "Judas Kiss") with Cruz in mind.

"Sebastian told me that I was his choice for that role and that he wrote it with me in mind," Cruz recalls.

Friends are important to Cruz. Aside from Berry who has become her friend, she is very close to Salma Hayek.

"My friends are important in my life," she discloses. "I take care of them. They are great people so I see them all the time or they come and see me. I spend a lot of time together with my friends."

CRUZ with good friend Berry

Boob-tube boo-boos

From page A28

Guest: Well, I really love to read. In fact, I have 350 books at home!

(Only 350 books? Big deal...)

* * *

Host: Do you consult your husband before making important decisions?

Guest: Oh, definitely, I trust his opinion.

Host: For example, when you decided to run for public office, what was the influx of your husband on your decision?

(Ay, influx!)

* * *

Host: Why did you go to the States with your wife?

Guest: To seek medical treatment for her, because she was diagnosed with malignant cancer.

(-as opposed to what other kind of cancer?)

***

Host: What does it take to be a successful baker like you?

Guest: Training and experience, but most of all, you really have to dedication!

(That, we'll rememberation.)

***

Quizmaster: The dugong is also called by another name—made up of two words, the first word is sea. What is the dugong's other name?

Contestant: Sea horse!

(No, sea cow!)

***

Quizmaster: Which island is called the island paradise of Mindanao? Hibokhibok Volcano is on this island.

Contestant: Boracay!

(No, Camiguin!)

***

Field Reporter: *Sin'ong iboboto mong presidente?*

Vendor: LPG!

Field Reporter: *Sino po? Pakiulit nga?*

Vendor: LPG! LPG!

(What a gas!)

New episodes

ON CARTOON Network, new episodes will be screened on two of the channel's series—"Teen Titans" (6 p.m., Fridays), "Courage, the Cowardly Dog" (9 p.m., Fridays).

Also catch this special screening: March 13 at 8 p.m., "1001 Rabbit Tales": Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck sell children's books for the same company, and a hilarious competition breaks out between them. Each rabbit-read narrative gives a classic fairytale a Looney Tunes twist!

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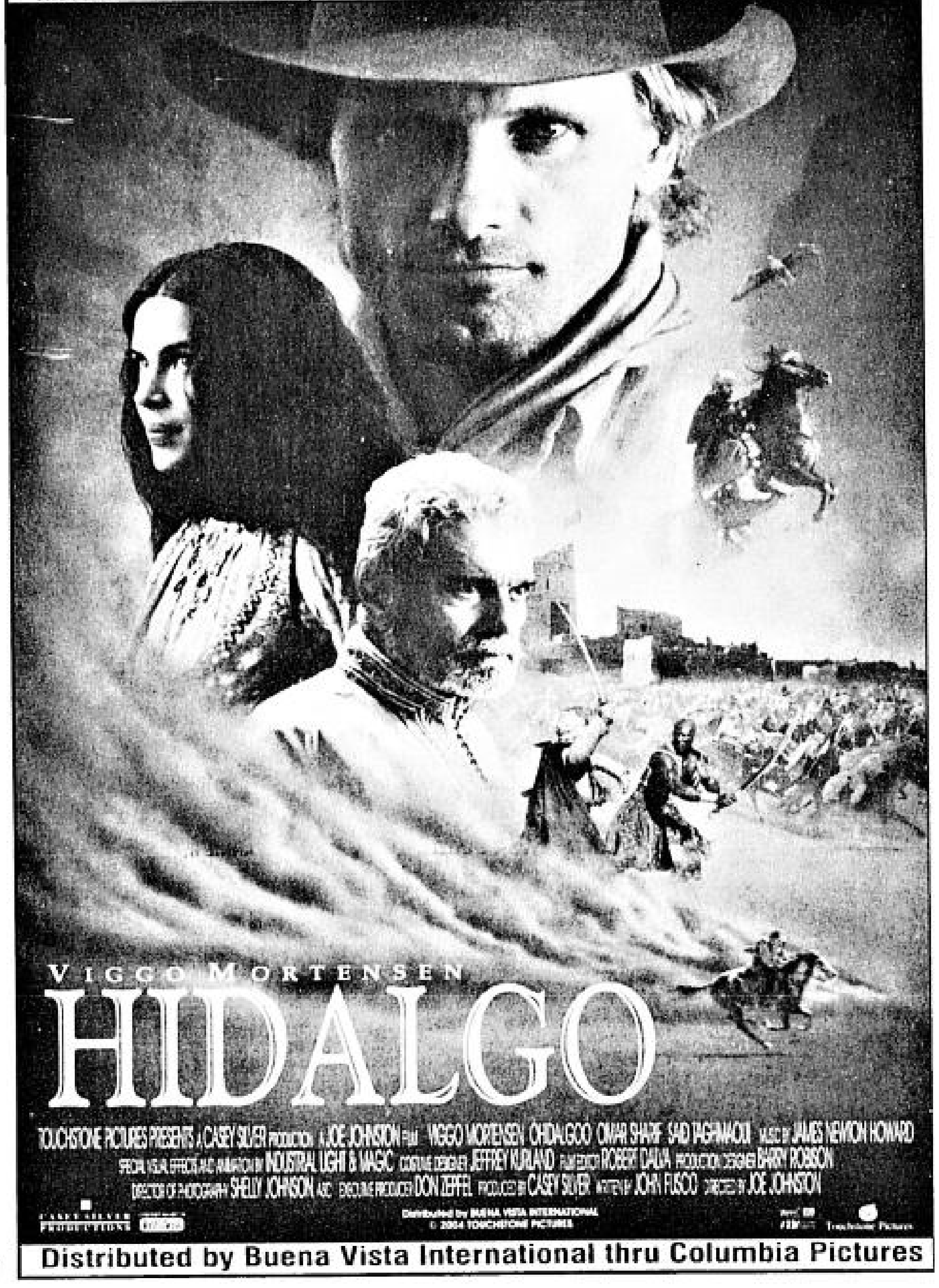
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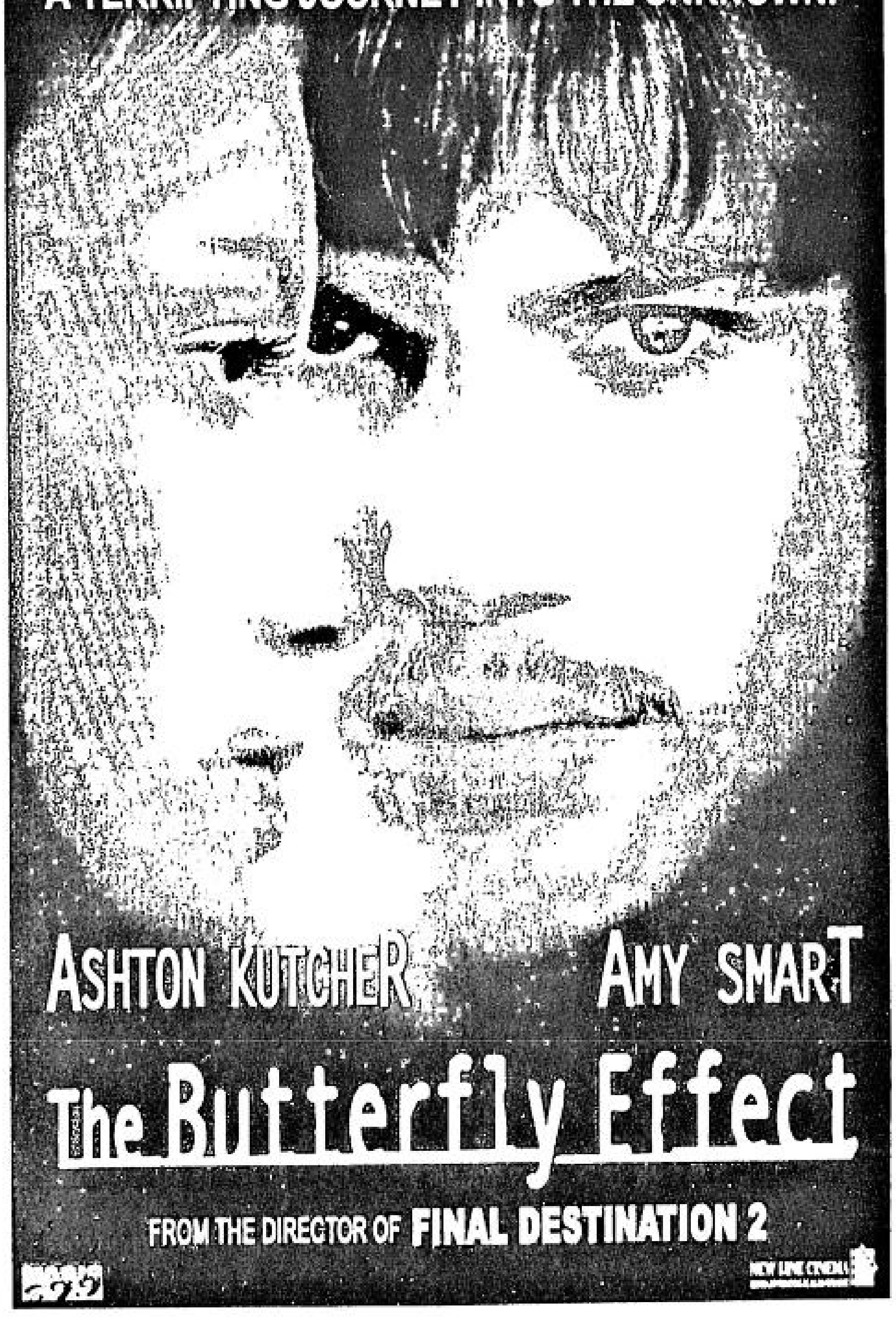
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Cinema 5 10 50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6.50, 9.00

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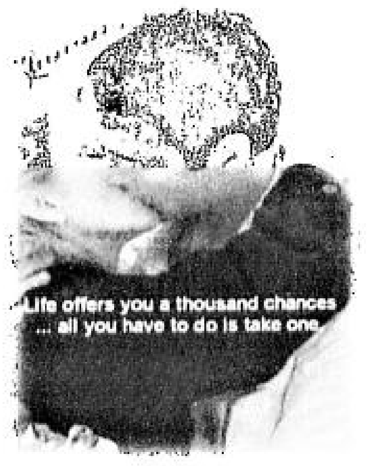
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ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Louie C. Camino**

Bleeding, numbness can't stop Rica Peralejo

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

EVEN if she has been bleeding profusely for a few weeks, actress Rica Peralejo still honored her commitments.

She told INQUIRER Entertainment that she had attributed the bleeding to an abnormal menstrual cycle. But when the bleeding continued for another three weeks, Rica decided to consult a doctor.

Rica had to undergo a trans-vaginal ultrasound, which she said had been very painful.

"That test was very painful. I was told that my ovaries were just in a confused state, and the whole thing was stress-related," she confided.

Abortion rumors

She is now laughing off rumors that she had an abortion.

Workaholic Rica Peralejo's various commitments have taught her to be very versatile, but she reveals that the past few months have been marked by various health scares. The actress-singer-host admits that constant worrying and the physical strain that comes with the demands of the job has taken a toll on her body.

But she is thankful at the sensitive and respectful treatment she received when she was in terrible pain: "I was asked very quietly at the hospital, 'Ma'am, do you have a history of pregnancy? Or abortion *po*?' It was funny because even if I was asked aloud, I really didn't care.

"At the time, I was just in pain, I wanted everything cured already. Everything is stress-related. My hormonal system wasn't functioning properly. They analyzed and explained the results to me; I was told that some people don't get it, but others bleed a lot when they're stressed," Rica explained.

More recently, Rica has been feeling a frightening numbness in her right arm.

"I'm a candidate for carpal tunnel syndrome. I think you get it from excessive use of the computer, or over-exertion with sports. There are days when my hand can't hold anymore, it can't work at all," she said.

She was tying her hair when her arm just dropped. The memory prompted her to imitate Uma Thurman's once-comatose character in "Kill Bill."

Rica said she tried to regain control of her motor functions through sheer will power.

"I was telling myself, 'You can do it, Rica!' But my arm kept dropping," she recalled.

She is currently having this problem fixed, and the treatment has been addressing these temporary nerve-limb malfunctions.

Doctor on call

Despite her medical complaints, Rica has continued working, not allowing these health hitches get in the way of her regular appearances in three ABS-CBN shows, "ASAP Mania," "OK Fine, Whatever," and the new daily show "To The Max."

"My vocal chords are developing a nodule because of excessive talking. When I started doing "To The Max," I got *malat* (hoarse) because it's really hard being a host. It's a reality-based show. You have to be hyper and energetic. But I'm getting my health back, little by little," Rica says, smiling.

She finds doing a soap series like her recently-concluded "Kay Tagal Kang Hinintay," relatively easier than her current hosting chores. The long shooting hours for the drama were expected, unlike her new volatile schedule with the reality-based TV show.

"I'm like a doctor on call. That's the hardest thing about doing a reality-based TV show. Everyday, I get text messages to go to different places at different times," she said.

Coffee addict

But Rica constantly finds time to de-stress herself and enjoy quiet things like editing photos using the fancy effects of Photoshop, as well as watching movies on video. She is also a self-proclaimed coffee addict—she owns

BLEEDING/ A26

RICA: Like a doctor on call

'American Idol' talent search a reality check, says Mr. C

By Anne Luisa E. Villarico

MUSICIAN Ryan Cayabyab sees the potential in Camile Velasco, the first of two Filipino-American who made it to the finals of the talent search "American Idol."

Ryan is just one of the millions of followers of the popular talent search, now airing on cable.

"This girl is very likeable," said Ryan, referring to Camille.

"Even if she is an American, you can still see the Filipino traits in her," he told INQUIRER Entertainment on Tuesday.

He described the popular talent search, now airing on cable, is a virtual reality check for aspiring pop artists.

"What's good about the show is that it is a reality check [for amateur singers]. Many singers think they are already great," Ryan said.

He admitted, "I enjoy watching the TV show."

The musician knows what he's talking about. He and wife Emmy Cayabyab runs Ryan Cayabyab The Music Studio, a music school that specializes in developing outstanding performance artists.

A music major, Emmy handles the chorus classes and conceptualizes the workshops and recitals at the studio.

This summer, the school is offering a specialized workshop called "The Pop Performer," which is intended for aspiring singers who have the knack for joining singing contests.

"We're giving it a push because of talent searches on TV like Star Circle Quest. Based on 'American Idol,' we can see who has the talent and who's just shouting," Annie Nepomuceno, one of the faculties for voice, said.

The workshop aims to identify the dos and don'ts in pop singing as manifested by vocal styling, stage presence and attitude.

Nepomuceno explained that the workshop is not just about teaching how to sing properly but it's also about educating students in using their (singing) talents.

MR. C: Giving talent searches a push

Overworked and underpaid

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

SEGMENT producers of ABS-CBN programs receive only P3,000 to P4,000 for their work in the station's shows.

An insider said this budget has not increased from five years ago.

"We are overworked and underpaid," the insider said. "Talk shows have the same budget since five years ago. Segment producers shoot day in and day out (for this amount). No budget revisions or studies have been made (by the network)."

This is why the production people of ABS-CBN have been discussing among themselves the possibility of moving to other networks, like ABC 5, which is said to be giving production staffers more realistic rates.

Some production people of ABS-CBN stay with the network only because of the prestige of working for the biggest broadcasting company in the country.

According to the insider, "contracted talents sign one-sided contracts with terms mostly in favor of the network."

Comedy and drama writers are also contemplating on moving to rival networks in search for a more humane treatment and bigger career opportunities.

They claimed that ABS-CBN has a take-it-or-leave-it attitude that is the opposite of its brand image of a warm and caring "*kapamilya*" that it has been projecting through its advertising.

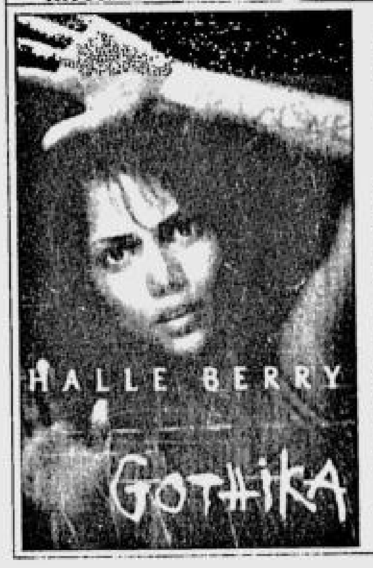
ABS-CBN should stop and take a quick reality check before a mass exodus of its production staff ensues.

Who was **Cogie Domingo** visiting on the set of "Click"? Is he eyeing any of the pretty young things in the cast? Or was he just enjoying the view?

Star Circle prevails

"Star Circle Quest" toppled "Extra Challenge" in the ratings game during its first week of telecast. Let's see if GMA 7's show lives up to its name and prevails in the ratings.

For feedback e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com



MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 Strictly for 13 years of age and up

Ghost story is "scary as hell"

Vengeful ghost in 'GOTHIKA'

"Because she is dead doesn't mean she's gone...".

Academy Award®-winner Halle Berry stars in Columbia Pictures' spine-chilling horror thriller as Dr. Miranda Grey, a criminal psychologist who awakens to find herself a patient in her own mental institution with no memory of the murder she's apparently committed. Haunted by a vengeful female ghost, Miranda must find out if she is being led farther from her sanity or closer to the truth. *GOTHIKA* also stars Robert Downey Jr. and Penelope Cruz.

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Boob-tube boo-boos

HOST: Congratulations for being chosen as one of the finalists this week. Why do you think you won?

Child contestant: Because Jesus died me.

(Oh, wow.)

* * *

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Host: What should we teach our children on this anniversary celebration of the Edsa Revolution?

Guest: We have to inform them that *si Ninoy, pinatay dahil nagkaroon tayo ng kalayaan!*

(Baliktad yata...)

* * *

Host: What do you have to say about our guest, a blind artist?

Guest: He's a very gifted person in spite of his physical defects. In spite of his defects, he's proven that he could overcome his defects.

(How politically incorrect can you get!)

* * *

Host: Can you tell us more about yourself, what makes you different from others?

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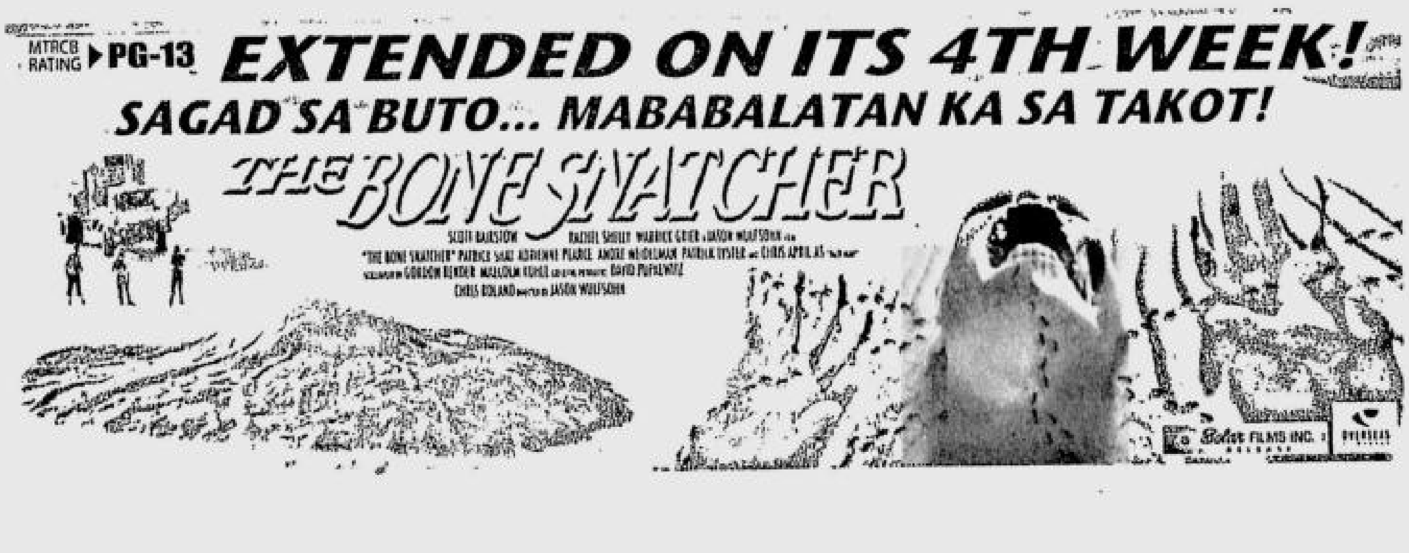
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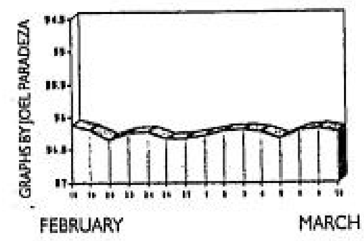


PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 56.235 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., March 10, 2004

¥ 111.38 = $ 1

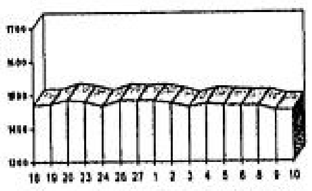
As of 5 p.m., March 10, 2004

GOLD: $399.25-400.75

per ounce Hong Kong, March 8, 2004

Stocks end flat

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

STOCKS ended flat yesterday in trade thinned by uncertainty over who will win May's presidential election and an absence of company news, but mobile phone firm Piltel gained on hopes of a merger with Smart.

Analysts said investors worried over rising market interest rates and the weak peso were looking ahead to a policy meeting of the central bank today, which is expected to leave interest rates unchanged.

"Market sentiment is wary of the political environment," said RCBC Securities analyst Edwin Gil. "Market action in the coming days would still be driven by activities in foreign bourses, the peso, the direction of interest rates and political developments."

The main index ended 0.08 point or 0.01 percent lower at 1,455.67, trimming its gain for the year to just 0.92 percent.

Turnover nearly halved to P412.2 million from Tuesday's P821.16 million. Fifteen stocks rose, 15 declined and 47 were unchanged.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the country's largest phone firm, closed unchanged at P940. It was the most active stock and cornered 47 percent of total trade.

But its 45-percent owned mobile phone firm Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel) rose 6.25 percent, or 10 centavos, to P1.70 on hopes it will merge with its larger affiliate, Smart Communications Inc.

Smart, the country's largest mobile phone operator, is required under its franchise to list on the exchange by August.

PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan has said the company was shelving its plan for an initial public offering due to bearish market conditions, sparking expectations he will merge Smart with Piltel for a back-door listing.

Chief rival Globe Telecom ended P10 lower at P860.

"Near-term focus is on the central bank meeting tomorrow. Unless the peso-dollar exchange drifts higher toward its all-time high of 56.35, we expect the central bank to keep policy steady," ForecastWeb said in a client report.

Reuters

By Michelle V. Remo

THE INTER-AGENCY Development Budget Coordination Committee has agreed to propose an increase the salaries of state employees, a move that is expected to boost morale in government offices.

In its meeting on Tuesday, the DBCC decided in favor of the proposal to increase salaries of government workers in view of their long-pending call to have their take-home pay raised.

A government official who attended the meeting said the DBCC would discuss details of the proposal, such as possible sources of its funding and the actual amount of increase, in its coming meetings. Upon discussion of the details, the group would raise its recommendation to the next Congress for legislation.

The move to raise salaries of government employees is expected to elicit support from state workers, whose last pay increase was in 1999. "The salary increase was only at about one to 2 percent. Considering inflation, employees barely felt that hike," the government official said.

Government workers were prevented from having their salaries raised because of the Salary Standardization Law. A legislation is needed to insert some revisions in the provisions of this law.

The move to raise salaries of government employees will have to be supported by proposals to increase revenue collection. The DBCC is expected to discuss in its next meeting additional revenue sources that will help improve the government's fiscal position.

The DBCC is hoping that the measures will be implemented in 2005. The measures include tightening of collection of common carriers tax on water transport, rationalization of excise tax on alcohol and cigarette products, and reduction of incentives on importation of capital equipment.

The government is hoping that the additional revenue measures will provide it an additional P40 billion a year.

The DBCC is an inter-agency body composed of the Department of Finance, the National Economic and Development Authority, the Department of Budget and Management, and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

PLDT chief bucks tax on texting

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. chair Manuel Pangilinan said he would not support calls to tax text messaging even if he was a signatory to a proposal of business groups that brought up the recommendation.

Pangilinan, one of the three business leaders who put together the ambitious 2004 Presidential Business Agenda, said he only deferred to the consensus of the majority that the profitable mobile phone texting service be taxed.

"You can't kill the goose that lays the golden egg," the PLDT chair said in an interview.

Text messaging had made previously losing mobile phone firms very profitable. Globe Telecom Inc. and Smart Communications Inc. raked in billions in pesos in profits last year from this service.

The country's more than 22 million cellular phone subscribers are estimated to send between 150 million and 170 million text messages a day. Phone companies charge P1 per text message sent.

A minimum 5-percent tax the finance de-

PLDT/B2

Gov't to trim budget gap to ₱188B in '05

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT is targeting to bring down the country's budget deficit next year by 5.4 percent to only P188 billion, as it hopes to collect more revenue with the implementation of additional tax-collection measures.

The inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), in its meeting on Tuesday, set the 2005 deficit target at 3.7 percent of gross domestic product.

The P188-billion deficit target assumes that the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2005 will reach P5.1 trillion. "The DBCC agreed that the 2005 deficit target would be set at 3.7 percent of GDP. This means the actual figure may be around P188 billion, but it may be changed depending on the actual GDP for next year," said a government source who attended the meeting.

For this year, the government has set the deficit ceiling at P197.8 billion or 4.2 percent of the expected GDP.

The source said the DBCC was set to discuss additional revenue measures that will increase tax collection and thereby help achieve the country's goal of having a balanced budget by 2010.

"The DBCC agreed to have a separate meeting for the discussion of the proposed tax measures," the government official said.

The INQUIRER earlier reported that the government was preparing a set of new revenue-enhancement measures that will give an additional P40 billion for the government every year.

The measures include the tightening of collection of the common carriers tax on water transport, rationalization of excise tax on alcohol and cigarettes, and reduction of incentives on importation of capital equipment.

The source said the government would push for the deliberation of the proposed tax measures in the next Congress.

The country's budget deficit in January stood at P16.12 billion. The amount was higher than the P13.9 billion recorded during the same month last year, but the Department of Finance said it was well on track to meet the P197.8-billion deficit ceiling for the year.

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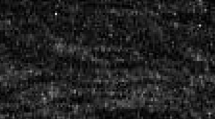
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BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

TODAY'S topic—i.e. "gossip"—is about the chief economist of a large foreign bank which is operating in the country.

"Operating," in banking parlance, simply means "making a lot of money by lending a lot of money here, particularly to the government."

Anyway, it seems that the chief economist has a little secret, and the chief economist shared it with some executives during a recent visit to Manila.

From what I heard, the chief economist wanted to touch base with the locals regarding the political scenario, which was reported abroad as ... well, worrisome.

* * *

AND so, with such a, er, worrisome political scenario, most chief economists of most large foreign banks were touching base here.

Well, since large foreign banks are, ahh, "operating" here, which means they are making money, they must consider politics as part and partial of "operating" here.

In his meetings with local executives, the chief economist supposedly revealed a little secret of quite a few large foreign banks.

And that was, the large foreign banks were already betting in favor of the peso—at least for the four-month forward delivery.

And that was how bad local politics looked to the large foreign banks—they have been expecting to make a lot of money out of it. Very, very worrisome!

* * *

FOR the sake of Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid, that little secret actually meant the large foreign banks were already betting on the recovery of the peso in a few months.

And the supposed "recovery" had no deep explanation. It was just that the peso's exchange rate has gone out of whack too much for too long already. In short—OVERACTING!

The thinking was that, at these levels today, the peso-dollar exchange rate already discounted the possibility of Sideburns' winning in the May elections.

And why did the market react in such a way? Well, precisely because of the campaign line of this cute administration of Gloriaetta.

They claimed that a Sideburns presidency would bring disaster to the Philippine economy. They said it was the reason why the peso's exchange rate was going crazy.

Of course they never said that their own propaganda line was not helping the peso's exchange rate any. You know—a case of wanting to win at all cost!

* * *

ONE reason, supposedly, why the mere possibility of a Sideburns presidency spooked the financial markets was that the leading candidate did not even have a platform of government.

Now, Sideburns revealed his platform yesterday. Unfortunately for all those heartless dollar speculators out there, his program of government did not contain a plan for the Philippines to invade Iraq or something like that.

Among the priorities of Sideburns was the huge debt of the government, which eat up close to half of the national budget every year, leaving us with almost nothing for frivolous things like infrastructure and classrooms.

The media releases of Sideburns thus started to talk about some economic measures, such as efforts to reduce the country's debt burden, in whatever ways which would be acceptable to the creditors themselves.

In other words, although Sideburns did not want to invade Iraq or support the al-Qaida, he also wanted to honor the country's foreign obligations. Really worrisome!

* * *

BIGSHOTS in business are proposing to the next president to legalize *jueteng*, as a way to raise money for infrastructure. Actually, we have been waiting for the right one to do it since the time of Tita Cory.

Still, front page news said that Sideburns wanted to think about the business sector's proposal to legalize jueteng. Hmm.

To me it was a safe position. Okay, he is now a politician. He must try to avoid controversial issues.

For you must remember that the same issue brought down the friend of Sideburns, no other than the man named Band ... Wrist Band.

It seems to me that, this early, Sideburns is learning to handle some controversial issues by refusing to comment on them head-on, but by declaring that he would give them thought.

That used to be the standard reply of Sen. Vicente Sotto, a.k.a. Tito, but without Vic and Joey, to anything which he probably could not make heads or tails of. The senator would always, er, "study" the issue.

Don't tell, we are going to have the world's most studious politicos again.

* * *

MONEY, like it or not, is our biggest problem. The government does not have a lot of it. Whatever little it has, moreover, most of which goes to debt service. How do we grow?

I thought that the BOT set-up could help us build the infrastructure which we needed a hundred years ago.

But not a single BOT contract came up under this cute administration of Gloriaetta.

Under this cute administration, every single contract of the government was put under jeopardy by the Supreme Court.

Take the meeting of the Australia and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce the other night, for instance!

Somebody asked the guest speaker, a ranking official of this cute administration, why contracts were not being honored in this country.

Thus, why would any foreign investor want to enter into BOT contracts with the government?

How do you answer such a question, really, except to mumble something about how hard working Gloriaetta has been, really?

And that's why she had to give away a lot of goodies in depressed areas, using our tax money?

* * *

NO, Bruno, I don't want our next leader, whoever he, she, it or they may be, to play a lot of politics again. We need some straightforward thinking today.

Studying the proposal to legalize *jueteng* may be a safe stand, but we cannot close our eyes to the sad reality that we need the money—all P30 billion or so of it.

For that's the estimated take in the numbers game every year. And who benefits from it? Well, maybe Bong this or Bong that, who happens to be one of the biggest supporters of some bigtime politician from here to the lahar area.

Really, it is possible that *jueteng* money can elect a lot of our officials this May, and they may even include the one who goes to Malacañang.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 10, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	16.5	16.75	16.5	16.5	46,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	45	45	44.5	45	202,500
China Banking Corp.	655	660	655	655	6,520
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38.5	38.5	38	38.5	98,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.59	0.59	0.58	0.58	60,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	25	25	24.75	25	22,100
Philippine National Bank	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	5,000
Phil. Savings Bank	27	27	27	27	10,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.25	12.25	12.25	12.25	5,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	26	26	26	26	1,300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	60,000
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	22.5	22.5	22.5	22.5	32,500
Globe Telecom Inc.	865	870	860	860	54,680
Ipeople Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	180,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	500,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.037	0.035	0.037	500,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.6	1.7	1.56	1.7	13,566,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	940	940	935	940	209,920
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	2,200,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	26,600
Manila Electric Co. B	32	32	32	32	83,600
Petron Corp.	2.95	3	2.95	3	770,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.95	0.94	0.95	30,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.26	1.3	1.22	1.22	520,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	500,000
Negros Navigation Co. Inc.	0.41	0.41	0.4	0.4	400,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	100,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	100,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.58	1.58	1.58	1.58	53,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.38	1.38	1,005,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.25	3.25	3.15	3.15	20,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.25	18.25	17.75	17.75	386,800
San Miguel Corp. A	56	56.5	56	56.5	40,900
San Miguel Corp. B	68.5	68.5	68.5	68.5	310,100
Universal Robina Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	166,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	500,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6	6.1	6	6.1	7,523,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.021	200,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1	1	1	1	30,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	33,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	43,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.58	0.58	0.57	0.58	1,370,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	600,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	219,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.84	1.84	1.84	1.84	30,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	2,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1,475,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.26	70,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	3,500,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	870,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	1,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	7,500,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	70,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	22.75	22.75	22.75	22.75	358,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	500
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,800
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,900
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
OTHERS					
Far Eastern University	400	400	400	400	680
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.4	905,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.36	90,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.04	1.04	1,097,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	14,000,000
SM Development Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	270,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	611,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	9,000,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	230,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	300,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	5,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	10,000,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	40,000,000

RP global bonds get 'BB' rating

SINGAPORE—Standard & Poor's Ratings Services has assigned a "BB" debt rating (foreign currency BB/stable/B; local currency BBB/stable/A-3) to the Philippines' planned $500-million or higher global bonds due 2015.

The sovereign credit ratings on the Philippine government is supported by the country's adequate external liquidity, with total debt service projected at 37 percent of current account receipts in 2004, similar to the median level for rated peers.

The total external debt is projected at 131 percent of current account receipts this year, the same as the median level.

"The government deficit is likely to remain relatively high at about 4 percent of GDP by government's definition this year, compared with 4.3 percent in 2003, due largely to weak tax collection," said S&P analyst Takahira Ogawa, director in the Asia-Pacific sovereign and public finance ratings group.

"The general government debt, excluding amounts guaranteed by the government and lent to public-sector corporations, is approaching 90 percent of GDP this year, compared with the median level of 51 percent for similarly rated sovereigns," he added.

Interest payments are likely to consume about 37 percent of the government's revenues, up from 22 percent in 1999.

The weak fiscal profile and shallow domestic capital markets force a continuing dependence on external capital to accelerate economic growth, raising the vulnerability of Philippine financial markets to adverse external developments, and constraining macroeconomic stability.

According to Mr. Ogawa, the Philippines' narrow tax base contributes to weak public finances.

Tax revenues as a share of GDP have fallen by more than 3 percentage points since 1997, due largely to weak revenue collections, although it showed some improvement last year.

Furthermore, there is an increasing risk of 'the government assuming contingent liabilities in the utility sector.

"The growing difficulty in implementing ambitious structural reforms and tough operating environment in the energy sector, as well as delays in restructuring some public sector enterprises, such as Napocor, raises the likelihood of the government having to assume more of these entities' debt in the coming years," Mr. Ogawa noted. *Reuters*

DISCLOSURES

SM Development Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 23, 4 p.m. at the Manila AB Room of Makati Shangri-La Hotel. Stockholders of record as of March 24 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

* * *

AJO.NET Holdings Inc. will sell its 488 membership certificates in Metropolitan Club Inc. for P81.17 million to Philippine Townships Inc. once the latter completes its purchase of the club's 2,000-square-meter land.

* * *

THE **BOARD of Republic Glass Holdings Corp.** approved the resolution extending the life of the company for another 50 years.

* * *

SM Prime Holdings Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 22, 3 p.m. at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel. Stockholders of record as of March 23 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

* * *

PREMIERE Entertainment Productions Inc., along with **Top Mega Enterprises Ltd.**, **Joycelink Holdings Ltd.**, **Gamboa Holdings Inc.**, **Emerald Investments Inc.**, and **Foodcamp Industries and Marketing Inc.**, agreed to the assignment of over 13.5 million Next Mobile Inc. common shares to PEP shareholders in exchange for the issuance of over 13.16 million PEP common shares. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

Exchange holding special board meet to resolve row

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange (PSE) said it would hold a special board meeting this Friday to decide on whether private institutions now holding 40 percent of the PSE will be allowed to vote during the bourse's annual stockholder's meeting on Saturday.

This was after stockbrokers warned that they would go to court to stop a deal that would allow investors—Government Service and Insurance System (GSIS), PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund, San Miguel Retirement Fund, Kim Eng Investment Ltd., KE Strategic Pte. Ltd., A. Soriano Corp. and Equinox Partners—to vote on Saturday when stockholders elect their new board.

PSE president Cayetano Paderanga Jr. said yesterday that the PSE has referred questions on the private placement to external lawyers from Quasha, Ancheta as well as Picazzo Buyco Tan law offices.

He said the board would decide whether to reconsider the sale on Friday after discussing the matter with the lawyers.

Stockbroker Ismael Cruz also told reporters yesterday that their group would insist that the approval of the sale of PSE's 40-percent stake be brought to a vote this Saturday.

Cruz represents 80 brokers who are opposed to the sale.

Cruz said the group was not objecting to the possibility that a non-broker might take over the helm of the local bourse provided the new chair can understand "their business."

Paderanga also said that despite the objections raised on how the private placement was done, the investors have not expressed any plan to pull out their investments in the PSE.

Separately, Paderanga said the board also decided to change the computation used in determining the components of the Philippine Stock Exchange composite index, or the basket of the largest and most actively traded companies in the stock market.

He said that instead of using the market capitalization—or the total outstanding shares of a company multiplied by its market price as the basis to rank companies included in the Phisix, among other standards, the PSE will use the amount of "free float" or available shares to be traded by the public multiplied by the market price.

PUBLIC AUCTION

CARS

2 Units MERCEDES BENZ • TOYOTA CRESSIDA • • TOYOTA PICK-UP

VIDEO & SLIDE PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT

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COMPUTER & PERIPHERALS

Monitors • JVC LAN Systems • Printers • Smart Photo Printers • Diskwriters • Scanners • Computer Sets •

ELECTRONIC & INDUSTRIAL ITEMS

• TOPCON DIGITAL LEVEL FOR SURVEYING
• TOPCON AUTOMATIC LEVEL FOR SURVEYING

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PNB generates ₱215M from property sale

PHILIPPINE National Bank (PNB) has raised P215 million from the sale of idle pieces of property in Metro Manila and Cebu.

PNB recently completed its first provincial but fifth auction in Cebu last Feb. 28, which fetched roughly P37 million.

The bank sold 17 out of 29 pieces of property in Cebu, Danao, Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue, auction manager and CB Richard Ellis Philippines director Jojo C. Salas said.

The biggest sold during the auction was a P6.68-million house and lot in Sunny Hills Talamban, Cebu City.

CBRE is targeting Tarlac for its next auction.

Sources also said the bank fetched the following amounts from its first four auctions: P50 million, P34 million, P53 million, and P41 million or a total of P178 million.

The bank earlier said it had reversed five years of financial bleeding after generating a net income of P168 million in 2003. PNB returned to profitability three years ahead of its target based on a rehabilitation program. This was due to significant improvements in net interest margin, fee-based income and operating expense management.

PNB has P75 billion worth of non-performing assets, consisting of P30 billion worth of foreclosed assets and P45 billion worth of bad loans.

Most of the assets to be offered are residential and commercial land, condominium units and commercial spaces mostly in the National Capital Region.

CB Richard Ellis is the world's largest integrated real estate services provider with annual revenues of approximately $2 billion. It specializes in investment sales, commercial and industrial leasing, assets and facilities management. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

CURRENCIES

March 10, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.811359	1.000000	56.1510
Japan	Yen	0.007294	0.008990	0.5048
United Kingdom	Pound	1.481136	1.825500	102.5037
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.104153	0.128368	7.2080
Switzerland	Franc	0.633181	0.780396	43.8200
Canada	Dollar	0.612670	0.755116	42.4005
Singapore	Dollar	0.475174	0.585652	32.8849
Australia	Dollar	0.617849	0.761499	42.7589
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.152203	2.652590	148.9456
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.216374	0.266681	14.9744
Brunei	Dollar	0.473787	0.583942	32.7889
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000117	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.020598	0.025387	1.4255
UAE	Dirham	0.220904	0.272264	15.2879
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.232500	69.2061
Argentina	Peso	0.279057	0.343938	19.3125
Brazil	Real	0.282703	0.348432	19.5648
Denmark	Kroner	0.134187	0.165385	9.2865
India	Rupee	0.017970	0.022148	1.2436
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.213544	0.263193	14.7786
Mexico	New Peso	0.074131	0.091366	5.1303
New Zealand	Dollar	0.552546	0.681013	38.2396
Norway	Kroner	0.116322	0.143367	8.0502
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014195	0.017495	0.9824
South Africa	Rand	0.123731	0.152499	8.5630
Korea	Won	0.000693	0.000854	0.0480
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024454	0.030139	1.6923

PLDT chief bucks tax . . .

From page B1

partment had earlier considered would give the government additional revenues of P8.5 million a day or more than P3 billion a year. One presidential aspirant said he planned to impose a 10-percent tax on text which would mean more than P6 billion in additional revenues for the state.

Asked how come he agreed to include the text impost in the business agenda for the next occupant of Malacañang, Pangilinan said he was "just one of many."

"I would rather keep quiet but I am not going to support it. That was the consensus of the group (that drafted the business agenda)," said the PLDT chair.

The ambitious business agenda being offered to all presidential aspirants also included recommendations to legalize jueteng, impose death moratorium and public executions, cut by half the pork barrel of lawmakers, increase fuel taxes and restructure the country's huge debt.

Pangilinan's objection to the text tax could stymie the efforts of business groups to have their recommendations taken seriously by the next president.

PSALM removes barrier to sale of power plants

By Abigail L. Ho

POWER Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) has resolved the issue of land ownership restriction on foreigners, which was a big stumbling block to the privatization of National Power Corp.'s generation assets.

In a presentation Tuesday afternoon, PSALM vice president for asset valuation and disposal Froilan Tampinco said the land ownership problem could be addressed through offering buyers long-term land lease deals. The lease will cover land on which power generation plants stood.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. said the land lease scheme was hoped to make PSALM's power plants more attractive to prospective foreign buyers, as it would get rid of the question on land ownership.

"Foreigners will not be disadvantaged in buying generation assets as there will no longer be any restrictions on land because of the long-term land lease agreement," he said.

Some power plants to be placed on the auction block had also undergone or were currently undergoing rehabilitation works to make them become more appealing to potential investors.

Because of this, Tampinco said PSALM would soon have to have the generation assets revalued so the state firm would know just how much these assets were now worth.

He said the PSALM board recently approved the revaluation of the generation assets, which would be done upon the formulation of steps on how to go about this as well as the award of the revaluation contract to a qualified entity.

"We've organized a task force that will formulate the steps in doing this. We'll have to bid out the revaluation efforts to qualified entities. We hope we can get a better valuation of our assets, considering that Napocor has been undergoing rehabilitation," he said.

As an example, he cited the case of the 3.5-megawatt Talomo hydroelectric power plant in Tugbok, Davao City.

During the initial valuation of the plant, he said, it had only one of four plants running. After rehabilitation, all of the plants there are now operating.

The Talomo system is up for bidding within the month. Tampinco said there were already three bidders lined up for this generation asset.

DTI moves to curb inflow of substandard products

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry yesterday said it would implement stricter guidelines on the entry of foreign products to curb the inflow of substandard imports.

The guidelines will cover electric flat irons, disposable lighters and used cylinders for liquefied petroleum gas, among others .

Trade Undersecretary Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said the new rules would be implemented by the Bureau of Product Standards (BPS), Bureau of Customs (BOC) and Philippine Product Safety and Quality Foundation Inc. (PPSQFI).

Cristobal said that under the new set of rules, the BOC would only release shipments of imported products covered by the BPS rules only if the importer had submitted an oath of undertaking with both agencies.

The undertaking should indicate the importer's commitment to comply with the requirements of the BPS import commodity clearance (ICC) certification scheme.

"When an importer (goes through the process), the BPS or the DTI provincial office will conduct tests on random samples based on (a relevant) Philippine National Standards," the official added.

It is only after passing such tests that the products in question would be allowed to use the ICC mark, Cristobal said.

He said the guidelines were in line with an agreement entered into by the concerned agencies on monitoring the quality and safety of imported products in May 2003.

"The DTI strengthens its stance in lessening, if not eradicating, substandard imported products in the market," Cristobal said.

He added that the private-sector PPSQFI had volunteered to cooperate with the government agencies as part of its efforts to protect the interest of consumers as well as that of businesses.

"This partnership of the public and private sectors ensures that, in the near future, only reliable products are in the market," Cristobal said.

Entry of new mobile phone firm opposed

By Clarissa S. Batino

SMART Communications Inc and Pilipino Telephone Corp., subsidiaries of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., have strongly opposed the application for a license to engage in a 3G cellular phone service filed by a company being linked to former PLDT chair Antonio "Tonyboy" Cojuangco.

Connectivity Unlimited Resources Enterprises Inc. or Cure filed with the National Telecommunications Commission its application for a provisional authority to operate a 3G cellular mobile telephone service. The company had already obtained a Congressional franchise to engage in this business.

However, Smart and Piltel are opposing the application saying there is no more room for another player in the cellular phone sector.

Smart and Piltel, in their opposition filed with the NTC, said Cure's application was "defective" because it fails to identify the areas where it intended to establish the 3G service.

"While the applicant had said it would submit a list of areas where it intended to initially provide the service, the list which it belatedly submitted did not sufficiently identify the coverage of the proposed service because as the applicant admitted, it would be incomplete," Smart and Piltel noted.

Another problem for Cure is the absence of NTC guidelines for the new cellular phone technology. In fact, the regulator has yet to come out with the available frequencies for the 3G.

"The applicant failed to prove the necessity for its application. At present, the services it seeks to provide are amply addressed by present telecommunication providers. It fails to identify what new services it will offer," said Smart and Piltel in their joint opposition submitted to the NTC.

Sources strongly believed that Cojuangco was behind Cure. Cojuangco had stepped down as chair of PLDT but remained a director of the company.

The 3G uses third generation, high-speed technology that will allow subscribers to download and access applications much faster than the current technology.

RP products to take center stage in NJ fair

PHILIPPINE Fiesta USA Inc., a New York-based trade exhibit organizer, will hold its 6th annual indoor Filipino-American Trade Exposition on Aug. 21-22 at the Meadowlands Convention Center in Secaucus, New Jersey.

With an average yearly visitors of 18,000 to 20,000 since it started six years ago, Philippine Fiesta Exposition combines consumer-based trade exhibits featuring products and services from the Philippines and the US, and a cultural festival that showcases the rich Filipino heritage and traditions.

"Each year's offerings of Philippine Fiesta are driven by what we think will excite the hard-to-please Filipino-American consumer," said Mila Mendez, Philippine Fiesta Inc. vice president for marketing.

Trade participants for the Philippine pavilion will offer various Philippine products, including handicrafts, home decors, Christmas decors and textile products. The Filipino-American consumer market in the US was estimated to be worth $52 billion.

The Philippine Fiesta will host over 130 booths for trade exhibits. Corporate sponsorships, booth reservations and advertising in the Fiesta News, can be made by contacting 212-682-6610, 212-682-2038 or through e-mail at *info@philippinefiesta.com or sepmgzn@aol.com or visit www.philippinefiesta.com*

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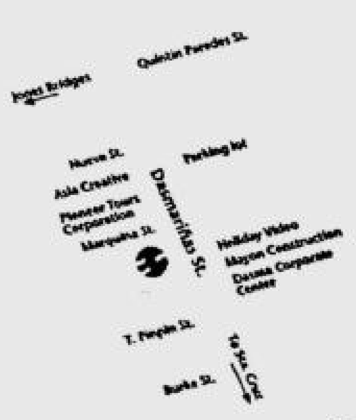

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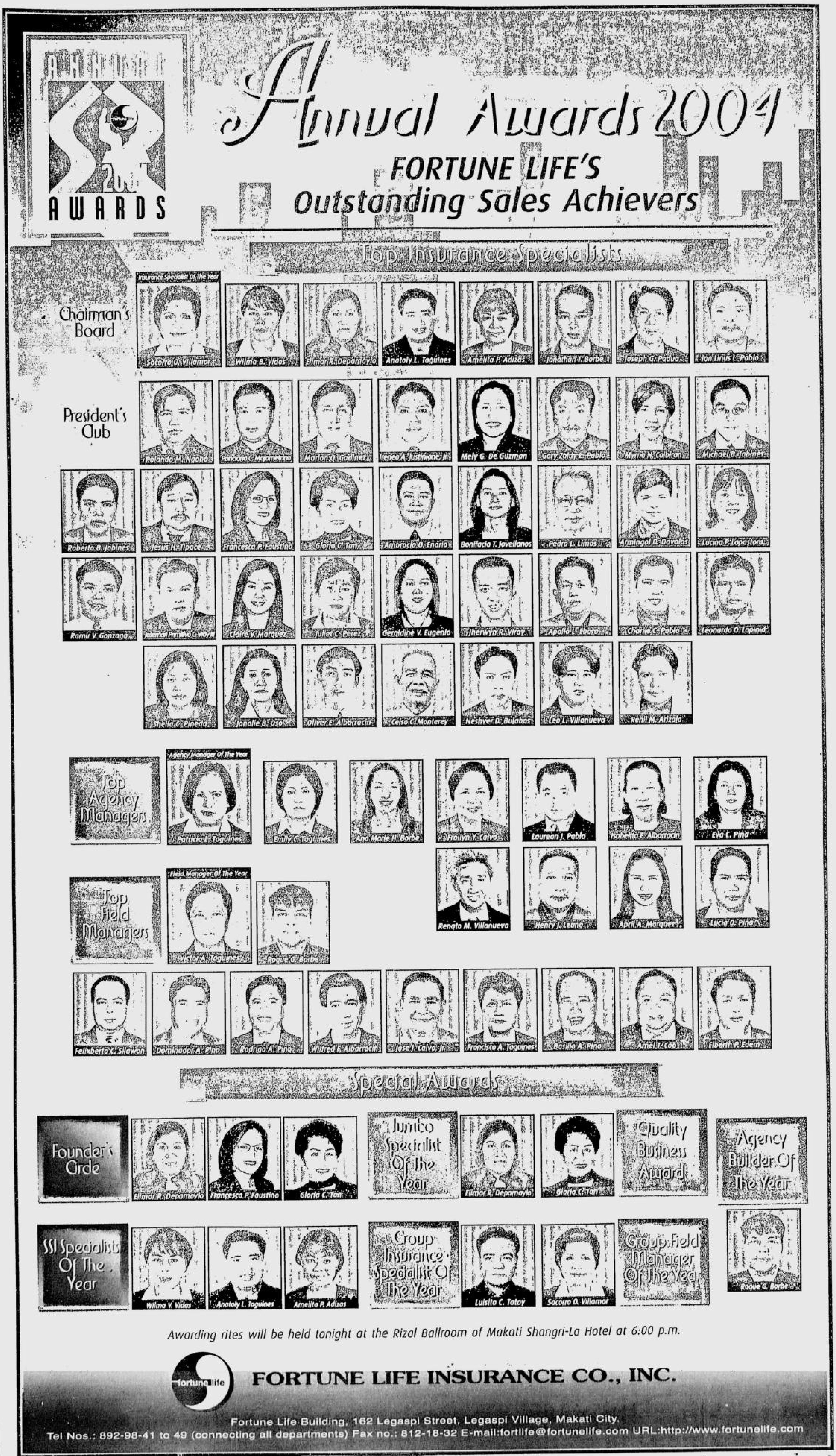

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DOE to auction off geothermal projects

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy has placed on the auction block 10 "highly prospective" geothermal sites through the so-called Geothermal Bidding Round (Geothermal 1).

To be auctioned off are contracts for exploration and development of geothermal fields.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. said in a briefing after yesterday's launch of Geothermal 1 that the 10 sites to be auctioned off were the best among the 35 areas that the government had identified as geothermal resources.

The 10 sites, scattered all over the country, had a combined potential generating capacity of between 300 megawatts and 470 MW.

The 10 geothermal fields include Manito-Kayabon (20-40 MW) in Albay, Rangas-Tanawon (40-80 MW) in Sorsogon, Biliran (20-40 MW) in Eastern Visayas, Amacan (20-40 MW) in North Davao, Dauin (40-80 MW) in Negros Occidental, Natib (40 MW) in Bataan, Mabini (20 MW) in Batangas, Montelago (20-40 MW) in Mindoro Oriental, Mt. Cabalian (in 60-110 MW)in Southern Leyte, and the Mindanao Optimization North Cotabato Project (20 MW).

Energy Undersecretary Eduardo Mañalac said these sites were chosen because of the ready market that the potential investors would have for the power that could generate there.

While this round of bidding was launched only yesterday, with more specific details to be discussed today, Perez said that six companies had already expressed interest in participating in the auction.

However, he declined to name these firms. He did not even say whether these companies were already doing business in the country.

Existing active geothermal power producers in the country include state-owned Philippine National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EDC), Philippine Geothermal Inc. (a subsidiary of US-based firm Unocal), California Energy, Ormat Inc., and Marubeni-Oxbow.

To further promote the bid round, he said the DOE would be going on a roadshow in the United States and New Zealand.

Since it started dabbling in geothermal energy production 25 years ago, the Philippines now ranks second in the world in terms of installed generating capacity at 1,932 MW.

The 35 identified geothermal resource sites, which include the 10 that would be up for auction, have an estimated potential generating capacity of 4,137 MW.

Saudi lifts import ban on RP coco

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINES is set to resume its exports of processed coconut to Saudi Arabia, after the Middle Eastern kingdom this month lifted the ban on the RP product.

"The lifting of the import ban would allow the Philippines to regain the $37 million worth of export revenues that were lost in the past six years," said Danilo Coronacion, Philippine Coconut Authority administrator.

In 1998, a plant disease known as cadang-cadang, had hit coconut farms in Quezon and the Bicol region, preventing the country from exporting fresh coconuts, coconut oil, copra and other products to Saudi Arabia and Taiwan.

Last year, the PCA and the agriculture department were able to contain the plant disease from spreading to other areas.

Coronacion yesterday said that Saudi Arabia's import ban on fresh coconuts remains. But RP officials are set to hold another round of talks with their Saudi Arabian counterparts to persuade them to lift the ban on the remaining products.

"We will propose that they could import from selected sources where we are able to contain the spread of the disease," he said.

SMC to set up Thai brewery

SAN Miguel Corp., Southeast Asia's largest food group, is setting up its first brewery in Thailand as it seeks a wider Asian market for its pilsner beers, a top company official said on Wednesday.

But analysts questioned the wisdom of the move, part of a plan to spend $100 million in each of seven Asian markets, saying the Philippines' largest company had yet to prove it could perform abroad.

"Over the last 10 years they've been spreading the brand around Asia. To date, this hasn't brought any major returns to the company," said Andrew Long, head of research at ATR-Kim Eng Securities. "So in the that sense we'd be a bit dubious."

San Miguel would compete in Thailand with strong local producers led by Thai Beverages PCL, maker of the top-selling Chang Beer. It would also have to establish its brand within the confines of a clampdown that has banned alcohol advertising on television before 10 p.m.

A Bangkok Post report said San Miguel would spend 3.7 billion baht ($93.65 million) on the plant in Rayong, 180 km (112 miles) east of Bangkok.

San Miguel has overseas breweries in Hong Kong, China, Australia, Indonesia and Vietnam. The company—which dominates the beer, liquor, soft drink, and processed-food sectors in the Philippines—is also seeking to push into Malaysia and Taiwan in 2004 to propel growth.

Reuters

RP gain seen in free trade with Japan

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PROPOSED free trade agreement (FTA) with Japan is seen to benefit the Philippine economy, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

Citing results of a study on the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA), the Neda said that an FTA with Japan will fuel the growth of RP's gross domestic product by as much as 1.7 percent.

The GDP growth, according to the study, will be brought about by increase in foreign investments and domestic production.

The study was conducted by Neda's research arm, the Philippine Institute of Development Studies.

Neda officials are expecting an increase in the country's exports and a decrease in the prices of domestic products, once the agreement takes effect.

Neda Director General Romulo Neri said that the government is looking at services sector as one of the biggest beneficiaries of an FTA with Japan.

Electronics, fresh fruits, houseware, construction materials, agriculture, and informal services, stand to gain with the agreement, according to another study conducted by the Asian Institute of Management.

Sectors including cement and motor vehicle parts, on the other hand, are expected to lose from the proposed bilateral free trade with Japan because of competition. But these sectors, according to the study, may still gain from the FTA if the technical skills of workers were to be enhanced.

Dr. Caesar Cororaton, another research fellow at PIDS, said that tariff adjustments resulting from the FTA will lead to an 8.88-percent decrease in the country's overall nominal tariff rate.

Because of this, the local cost of production is expected to decline by 0.12 percent, which will translate to an increase in Philippine export competitiveness.

RP works out additional World Bank funding

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE government is working out alternative funding facilities with the World Bank to raise much-needed foreign exchange.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura yesterday told reporters before a meeting with representatives from the International Monetary Fund and the WB that the government would like to explore cheaper funding options.

"We are just trying to maximize sources of borrowing," Buenaventura said. "We are looking at World Bank facilities because it's probably cheaper than commercial bank lending."

Loans from multilateral agencies like the WB usually carry lower interest rates and longer maturities.

The BSP chief said since commercial loans were becoming more expensive, it might be better to tap multilateral loan alternatives.

He said the borrower, however, would still be the national government.

Proceeds from the government's foreign borrowings, however, would augment the country's gross international reserves.

The country's GIR fell to $15.76 billion as of end-February, from $16.08 billion in January, due to foreign exchange outflows.

Although the BSP has conserved its reserves by minimizing direct intervention in the spot foreign exchange market, even when the peso is tumbling to all-time lows, outflows were inevitable.

The 2-percent decline in the GIR was due mainly to the debt servicing requirements of the national government and the BSP itself.

But this was partly offset when the national government deposited with the BSP its net loan proceeds from the RP global bond exchange.

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3	GHOST HOUSE
4	SHIRI

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926

1	TORQUE
2	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
3	ANNIE B

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
2	SPIRAL
3	TORQUE
4	ANNIE B

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1	ANNIE B
2	GOTHIKA
3	TORQUE
4	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	ANNIE B
2	JEEPER CREEPERS
3	HAUNTED MANSION

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1	ANNIE B
2	DUPLEX
3	COLD MOUNTAIN
4	RUN AWAY JURY

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795-3320

1	COLD MOUNTAIN
2	DUPLEX
3	ANNIE B

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1	DRAGON VS NINJA
2	
3	KISKISAN
4	GRUDGE - 2

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1	DRAGON VS. NINJA
2	U BELT
3	TORQUE
4	CHEPER BY THE DOZEN
5	SPIRAL

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1	CHEPER BY THE DOZEN
2	ALYAS BOMBA QUEEN

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558

1	CHEPER BY THE DOZEN
2	TORQUE
3	GRUDGE-1

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283

1	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2	KUYA
3	RUN AWAY JURY
4	COLD MOUNTAIN

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel 520.8914

1	RESERVE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	WATER DEMON
2	GHOTIKA
3	TORQUE
4	ANNIE B

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1	BUGBUG SARADO
2	DRAGON VS NINJA

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

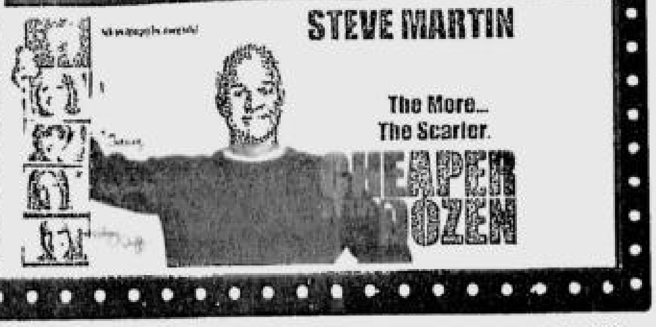
ADVANCED SCREENING THX DOLBY dts SDDS

FESTIVAL CINEMA
Level 4
Festival Supermall
Filinvest - Alabang

Tel 85035-71 to 72

Schedule subject to change without prior notice

NOW SHOWING


STEVE MARTIN
The More...
The Scarier.
CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Lise Villeneuve at The Podium

FRENCH Canadianjazz singer Lise Villeneuve will be giving a musical performance at The Podium's Cinema 1 on Wednesday, March 17 at 7 in the evening. This rare performance is a project of the Canadian embassy and The Podium in cooperation with Smart Communications.

The multi-talented singer-composer-pianist will thrill audiences with her rich repertoire of original compositions, mostly in French. These include Pauline Ester's Une Fenetre Ouverte and Koehler Arlen's Stormy Weather, as well as her own compositions characterized by personal lyrics.

The latter will give the audience a glimpse of the artist's persona and experiences: Le Vieux Port (The Old Port), for example, is about an encounter of Montreal, while Chere Maman (Dear Mother) is about chasing the musical dream. Lise will also sing about perseverance (Un mardi or On a Tuesday); distance and family (Loin de Vous or Far from Home); long distance love (Toi et moi or You and Me on Friendship); and the inspirations of love and liberty (L'hirondelle or The Sparrow). She bids goodbye to the audience with Sur vois visages (I See It On Your Faces).

Lise began her career in Alberta with two first prize at the Gala Albertain de la Chanson in 1995 and 1997. The Franco-Albertan went on to win Jen m'Austerise, a Radio Canada competition for song lyrics twice. She widely gained exposure in 1997 when she was selected as an opening act for Daniel Belanger's Alberta Tour, performing with her folk trio Euphonie.

In 1999, she was invited to record a CD in Yellowknife, and then represented Alberta at the Village de la Francophonie at that year's Frencophone Summit in Moneton, New Brunswick. Deciding to explore new horizons, she departed for the metropolis of Montreal in the same year and quickly became acquainted with the jazz milieu and performed in various locations.

Lise was invited to sing at the 2001 World Athletics Games in Edmonton, and to participate in the Radio Canada TV show, Un Aire de Famille by Marie-Michele Desorsiers. In 2002, she was a semi-finalist in the Ma Premiere Places des Artes competition in Montreal. She was also a finalist at the Festival en Chanson de Granby.

In February 2003, her star shone brightly as Canada's representative to the prestigious Tremplin International de la Chanson Francophone in Paris where she won first prize.

Lise Villeneuve's concert at The Podium is one of the highlights of the annual Journee Internationale de la francophonie (International Day of the Francophone), the product of the innovative effort to bring together countries that share French as a common language.

La Francophonie will be celebrated in Manila in collaboration with Alliance Francaise de Manille and members of the Francophonie that have representation in the Philippines. These include Belgium, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Haita, Ivory Coast, Laos, Lebanon, Lithuania, Monaco, Morocco, Poland, Romania, Senegal, Seychelles, Slovenia, Switzerland, Togo, Vanuatu and Vietnam.

Lise Villeneuve in Concert is a collaborative effort of the Canadian Embassy in Manila, The Podium, and Smart Communications in cooperation with Jam 88.3 and Wave 89.1.

PHILIP
MORRIS
PHILIPPINES
INC.

PHILIP MORRIS FOREST IN THE LA MESA WATERSHED

Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc (PMPMI) recently forged a partnership with ABS-CBN Foundation. PMPMI managing director Chris Nelson presented to ABS-CBN Foundation Inc managing director Gina Lopez a facsimile of the P1-million check donated by PMPMI to Bantay Kalikasan's 'Save the La Mesa Watershed' project during Lopez's visit to PMPMI Head Office in Makati City. Bantay Kalikasan is the media-based environmental program of ABS-CBN Foundation Inc supported by a multi-sectoral network of government agencies, private organizations, and non-government organizations. Also in photo are (from left) Bantay Kalikasan resource mobilization manager Joanna Gilladoga and PMPMI corporate affairs director Bayen Elero.

BANCO DE ORO
ACTIVE BILL
M.O.A. SIGNING

PLDT AND BANCO DE ORO SIGN MOA

PLDT and Banco De Oro Universal Bank recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement for PLDT Active Bill Payment Service and Direct Internet Payment (Electronic bills presentment and payment thru the Internet). Signatories are from left: PLDT SVP for Retail Business Group, Claro Carmelo Ramirez; PLDT SVP for corporate finance and treasury, Anabelle Chua; PLDT SVP for corporate business head, Ernesto Alberto; BDO SVP for transaction banking group, Ismael Estela; BDO VP for cash management, Jaime Nasol; and BDO VP for corporate banking, Charles Rodriguez.

CANINE DEPOT LAUNCHES FREE HOME DELIVERY

With the growing demand for real, quality pet food, Canine Depot recently launched its free home delivery service for their wide array of specialty food products. For a minimum order of P500, customers can call 715-4024, 714-2435 or 0917-7939475 and purchase Canine Depot's popular brands. Each order will be delivered right at the customer's doorsteps within 48 hours (except on Thursdays). Customers are advised to call in their order a few days before their own stock runs out to ensure their pets will have sufficient food. In photo preparing the delivery orders for the day are Canine Depot supervisor Richard Escorpion (right) and delivery van crew Jojo Goron.

Ten Consumer Products Achievers

EXCELLENCE IN SALES AND MARKETING

The National Consumer Affairs Foundation and the Year-Ender Excellence Awards committee recently conferred on Von Hizon (center), managing director of The Andresons Group Inc, the Year-Ender Excellence Awards for Sales and Marketing 2003 in awarding ceremonies at the AFP Theater. Shown with her in photo is Jonathan Navea (far left), overall chair. Earlier, Hizon was also honored the Presidential Award by the Philippine Marketing Association on its Golden Anniversary Induction Ceremonies at Malacañang Palace.

Bits & Clips

Digital Video Fest

GO HIGH-TECH as Automatic Centre presents a new way of taking picture: via digital technology. The Digital Video Fest, which is ongoing until today at the Glorietta 4 in Ayala Center, Makati City, features the latest models and technologies in digital cameras offered by renowned brands such as Canon, Olympus, Kodak, Vivitar and Casio.

UK supports Wastex 2004

THE ENVIRONMENTAL Sector Group of the United Kingdom Trade and Investment supports Wastex 2004 which will be held from March 11 to 13 at the Philippine Trade Training Center. Organizer is Edutech Trade and Services Corp. Speakers from the UK environment industry will discuss topics on sanitary landfills, handling, municipal, household wastes, materials recovery/recycling and other waste management subjects.

GameChannel campus tour

GAMECHANNEL, the popular interactive SMS-TV show powered by Wireless Services Asia (WSA), started its 2004 campus tour recently at the University of Santo Tomas (UST) in España, Manila. Hosted by GameJock Iya, the festivities lasted until 8:00 in the evening of fun and total excitement. Aside from the interactive SMS games, UST people were treated to an acoustic experience. GameChannel airs on IBC-13 every Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6 p.m. For more information regarding GameChannel, please visit www.gamechannel.tv.

'Art of Sushi' at Nishiki

EDSA Shangri-La Nishiki skillfully crafts the "Art of Sushi" from March 11 to 19 with guest chef Satoru of Nishimura Hong Kong. The "Art of Sushi" is available for lunch and dinner at Nishiki, located at Edsa Shangri-La Mezzanine. For inquiries and reservations, call 633-8888 ext. 2738 and 2739.

Fortune Life Awards set

FORTUNE Life is set to celebrate its Annual Awards Night on tonight at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel. The awards night will pay tribute to the top insurance specialists and sales managers who will receive awards for outstanding sales production from Fortune Life. Ambassador Antonio Cabangon Chua, Fortune Life's chair emeritus and founder will lead the welcoming of guests and awardees together with other company officials, including Fortune Life president and COO Armando Trinidad and SVP for marketing and sales Elpidio Pino.

All set for 'Rush in the Sun'

PREMIERE fashion hub, Rustan's Department Store, presents its much awaited summer extravaganza entitled "Rush in the Sun" as it ties up with luxury heavyweights, InterContinental Manila, Prestige Cars BMW, and Princess Cruises. It is expected to cause waves in Manila's fashion scene as Rustan's presents its spectacular summer collection from its own private labels and the best brands from all over the globe via an explosive fashion show. "Rush in the Sun" will be launched tonight at 6 p.m. at the poolside of InterContinental Manila.

Lone Star Ultra has arrived

LONE Star Ultra is the first light beer in the country made ultra light by lowering its carbohydrate content to less than a fourth of regular beer. It offers the fun in beer drinking minus the beer belly. Lone Star Ultra announces its presence by presenting the biggest rock concert to hit Manila, Incubus Live in Manila slated on March 12 at the CCP Open Grounds.

Symposium on diabetes and hypertension

THE FAR Eastern University will hold a Clinical Research Symposium on Diabetes and Hypertension from March 12 to 13 at the University Auditorium. The symposium aims to promote clinical research in diabetes and hypertension which are two major health problems in the Philippines. Attendance to the symposium earns an accreditation of 65 CME units from the Philippine Medical Association. Those interested may contact tel. 735-5621 loc. 245, and 735-8713

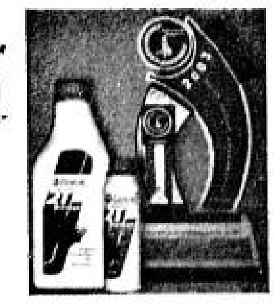
Product Files

Read those labels carefully

Sanicare
Sanicare

WHEN it comes to buying tissue paper, look at the ply and the number of sheets. For facial and bathroom tissue, there's one ply, two ply and three ply. There are 200 sheets, 250 sheets, 300 sheets etc. Some tissue papers multiply the number of sheets by the ply. Some don't. Other toilet papers have a cardboard core with a very wide diameter to make them look thicker than they actually are. So take a close look at the stuff you buy. Some tissue papers are made of 100 percent virgin pulp and are chlorine-free. Others use recycled paper which are bleached and made white by artificial whiteners. Read those labels. Sometimes, you'll be pleasantly surprised. Some toilet papers, like Sanicare, are made of 100 percent virgin pulp and are actually less expensive than those that come from recycled paper.

Castrol 2T Trimax cited as best engine protector



CASTROL 2T Trimax, a 2-stroke motorcycle oil from the world renowned motor lubricant company, Castrol, has just been awarded as Top Engine Protector for Tricycle of 2003 in the 20th Annual Year-Ender Excellence Awards. The recognition was given at a ceremony held on Jan. 29, at the AFP Theater in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City. The award cited Castrol 2T Trimax for its excellence and quality.

Dream come true for soldiers

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo inaugurated last Jan. 28 the biggest housing project for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) personnel. The project, called Bonifacio Heights, will be built on a seven-hectare property on Lawton Road, Fort Bonifacio in Taguig, located at the back of rich enclaves Forbes Park and Dasmariñas Village, and a stone's throw away from exclusive condominium Essensa.

Some 2000 military personnel will benefit from this housing project, making it the single biggest development project of its kind.

Bonifacio Heights is a joint undertaking of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), Armed Forces of the Philippines and private developer DMCI Homes. DMCI Homes was the winning developer, having come up with the best and cheapest design for the project.

No government funds will be used for the project, which will be undertaken on a turnkey basis. The development firm will construct the medium-rise residential buildings and will only be paid upon take-out of the completed units.

According to HUDCC chair Michael Defensor, the housing project will have amenities comparable to upscale private developments at one-third their selling price in the market today. Units will be priced as low as P630,000 to as high as P930,000 with amortization of up to 30 years.

The Home Development Mutual Fund (HDMF) or Pag-Ibig Fund will provide a mechanism to facilitate the take-out of the project through a special lending window for AFP personnel.

PARAÑAQUE PNP ENHANCE QUICK-RESPONSE EMERGENCY SYSTEM

Parañaque acquires a new state-of -the-art computerized alarm system that gives residents direct access to police and the Office of the Mayor during all kinds of emergency situations. Parañaque City Mayor Joey Marquez hands over the portable wireless security radios to members of the Parañaque PNP that will further enhance the Quick-Response Emergency System of the City.

SMELL BENCH AND JIMENEZBASIC'S RESPONSE

If there's one thing that Filipinos love - it's beauty pageants. There are certain must-see qualities when you pit female against female in the ultimate non-physical cat fight that Pinoys simply lap up. Tension and beauty, drama and poise, wit and witlessness, grace under pressure, pressured to exhibit grace --- can you ask for anything more? Undoubtedly, all roads lead to much anxiety, and where there is anxiety there is body odor, especially under the arms. This is the premise behind Bench and JimenezBasic Advertising's New York Festivals award winning TV Spot for Bench Response, an anti-perspirant/deodorant. It was during the beauty contest season in the Philippines when the whole archipelago got a whiff of this spot

Republic of the Philippines

COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

Manila

ALLOCATION OF SEATS OF (1) MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES; (2) ELECTIVE MEMBERS OF THE SANGGUNIANG PANLALAWIGAN; (3) SANGGUNIANG PANGLUNSOD; AND (4) SANGGUNIANG BAYAN IN CONNECTION WITH THE MAY 10, 2004 NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS
x--------------------------------x

Present:

Chairman Benjamin S. Abalos, Sr.
Commissioner Rufino S.B. Javier
Commissioner Mehol K. Sadain
Commissioner Resurreccion Z. Borra
Commissioner Florentino A. Tuason, Jr.
Commissioner Virgilio O. Garcillano
Commissioner Manuel A. Barcelona, Jr.

Promulgated: 8 March 2004

RESOLUTION NO. 6662

The Commission on Elections by virtue of the powers vested in it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code and other elections have hereby allocates, in connection with the May 10, 2004 national and local elections, the number of seats of elective: (1) Members of the House of Representatives; (2) Members of the sangguniang panlalawigan; (3) Members of the *sangguniang panlungsod*; and (4) members of the *sangguniang bayan*, as shown in Annex "A", "B", "C", and "D" hereof, respectively, which annexes shall form an intgral part of this Resolution.

Let the Education and Information Department publish this Resolution in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines, and to furnish copies thereof to all Regional Election Directors, Provincial Election Supervisors and Election Officers.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RUFINO S.B. JAVIER
Commissioner

MEHOL K. SADAIN
Commissioner

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

VIRGILIO O. GARCILLANO
Commissioner

MANUEL A. BARCELONA, JR.
Commissioner

Records and Statistics Division, ERSD

ANNEX A

May 10, 2004 National and Local Elections

Number of Seats for the House of Representative

REGION/PROVINCE/CITY	*NUMBER OF SEATS FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*
PHILIPPINES	**212**
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION	**27**
Manila City	6
Quezon City	4
Kalookan City	2
Makati City	2
Parañaque City	[redacted]
Valenzuela City	2
Mandaluyong City	1
Pasay City	1
Pasig City	1
Las Pinas City	1
Muntinlupa City	1
Marikina City	1
Malabon City - Navotas	1
Tagig - Pateros	1
San Juan	1
CORDILLERA ADM. REGION	**7**
Abra	1
Apayao	1
Benguet	1
Baguio City	1
Ifugao	1
Kalinga	1
Mt. Province	1
REGION I	**12**
Ilocos Norte	2
Ilocos Sur	2
La Union	2
Pangasinan	6
REGION II	**10**
Batanes	1
Cagayan	3
Isabela	4
Nueva Viscaya	1
Quirino	1
REGION III	**21**
Aurora	1
Bataan	2
Bulacan	4
[redacted]	[redacted]
Nueva Ecija	4
Pampanga	4
Tarlac	3
Zambales	2
REGION IV - A	**19**
Batangas	4
Cavite	3
Laguna	4
Quezon	4
Rizal	2
[redacted]	[redacted]
REGION IV - B	**7**
Marinduque	1
Occidental Mindoro	1
Oriental Mindoro	2
Palawan	2
Romblon	1
REGION V	**14**
Albay	3
Camarines Norte	1
Camarines Sur	4
Catanduanes	1
Masbate	3
Sorsogon	2
REGION VI	**18**
Aklan	1
Antique	1
Capiz	2
Guimaras	1
Iloilo	5
Iloilo City	1
Negros Occidental	6
Bacolod City	1
REGION VII	**15**
Bohol	3
Cebu	6
Cebu City	2
Negros Oriental	3
Siquijor	1
REGION VIII	**12**
Biliran	1
Eastern Samar	1
Leyte	5
Northern Samar	2
Samar	2
Southern Leyte	1
REGION IX	**7**
Zamboanga del Norte	3
Zamboanga del Sur	2
Zamboanga City	1
Zamboanga Sibugay	1
REGION X	**11**
Bukidnon	3
Camiguin	1
Lanao del Norte	2
Misamis Occidental	2
Misamis Oriental	2
Cagayan de Oro	1
REGION XI	**11**
Compostela Valley	2
Davao Oriental	2
Davao del Norte	2
Davao del Sur	2
Davao City	3
REGION XII	**6**
North Cotabato	2
Saranggani	1
South Cotabato	2
Sultan Kudarat	1
REGION XIII - CARAGA	**7**
Agusan del Norte	2
Agusan del Sur	1
Surigao del Norte	2
Surigao del Sur	2
ARMM	**8**
Basilan	1
Lanao del Sur	2
Maguindanao	2
Sulu	2
Tawi-tawi	1

Records and Statistics Division, ERSD

ANNEX A

May 10, 2004 National and Local Elections

Number of Seats for the House of Representative

Records and Statistics Division, ERSD

ANNEX B

Number of Seats of Sangguniang Panlalawigan

May 10, 2004 National and Local Elections

REGION/PROVINCE	Classification of Province	TOTAL	1st District	2nd District	3rd District	4th District	5th District	6th District	Remarks
CAR									
1 Abra	3rd Class	8	4	4					
2 Benguet	2nd Class	10	4	6					
3 Ifugao	3rd Class	8	4	4					
4 Apayao	3rd Class	8	4	4					
5 Kalinga	3rd Class	8	4	4					
6 Mountain Province	3rd Class	8	4	4					
REGION I									
1 Ilocos Norte	1st Class	10	5*	5					
*including Laoag City									
2 Ilocos Sur	1st Class	10	5*	5					
* including Vigan City & Candon City									
3 La Union	1st Class	10	5	5					
* including San Fernando City									
4 Pangasinan	1st Class	12	2*	2	2**	2	2***	2	RA 8553
*including Alaminos City									
**including San Carlos City									
***including Urdaneta City									
REGION II									
1 [redacted]									
2 Cagayan	1st Class	10	3	3	4*				
*including Tuguegarao City									
3 Isabela	1st Class	10	3	2	3*	2			
*including Cauayan City									
4 Nueva Vizcaya	2nd Class	10	5	5					
5 Quirino	3rd Class	8	4	4					
REGION III									
1 Bataan	1st Class	10	5	5*					
*including Balanga City									
2 Bulacan	1st Class	10	3*	2	2	3**			
*including Malolos City									
**including San Jose Del Monte City									
3 Nueva Ecija	1st Class	10	3	2*	2**	3***			
*including San Jose City & Science City of Munoz									
**including Cabanatuan City and Palayan City									
***including City of Gapan									
4 Pampanga	1st Class	10	2	3	3	2			
*including San Fernando City									
5 Tarlac	1st Class	10	3	4*	3				
*including Tarlac City									
6 Zambales	2nd Class	10	3	7					
7 Aurora	3rd Class	8	4	4					
REGION IV - A									
1 Batangas	1st Class	10	2	3*	2**	3***			
*including Batangas City									
**including Tanauan City									
***including Lipa City									
2 Cavite	1st Class	10	3*	4**	3***				
*including Cavite City									
**including Trece Martirez									
***including Tagaytay City									
3 Laguna	1st Class	10	3	3*	2**	2			
*including Calamba City									
**including San Pablo City									
4 Quezon	1st Class	10	2	3*	2	3			
*including Lucena City									
5 Rizal	1st Class	10	3	5					MR No 3916
Antipolo City (2 seats allocated for Sangguniang Panlalawigan)			1	1					RA 9232
REGION IV - B									
1 Marinduque	4th Class	8	4	4					
2 Occidental Mindoro	2nd Class	10	5	5					
3 Oriental Mindoro	2nd Class	10	5*	5					
*including Calapan City									
4 Palawan	1st Class	10	5	5*					
*including Puerto Princesa									
5 Romblon	3rd Class	8	4	4					
REGION V									
1 Albay	1st Class	10	3*	3**	4***				
*including Tabaco City									
**including Legaspi City									
***including Ligao City									
2 **Camarines Norte**	**2nd Class**	**10**	**5**	**5**					
3 Camarines Sur	1st Class	10	3	2	2	3*			
*including Iriga City									
4 Catanduanes	3rd Class	8	4	4					
5 Masbate	2nd Class	10	2	4*	4				
*including Masbate City									
6 Sorsogon	2nd Class	10	5*	5					
*Sorsogon City									
REGION VI									
1 **Aklan**	**2nd Class**	**10**	**5**	**5**					
2 **Antique**	**2nd Class**	**10**	**5**	**5**					
3 Capiz	2nd Class	10	5*	5					
*including Roxas City									
4 Guimaras	4th Class	8	4	4					Min Res 2950
5 Iloilo	1st Class	10	2	2	2	2*	2		
*including Passi City									
6 Negros Occidental	1st Class	12	2*	2**	2***	2****	2*****	2******	RA 8553
*including Escalante City and San Carlos City									
**including Cadiz City and Sagay City									
***including Silay City, Victorias City and Talisay City									
****including Bago City and La Carlota City									
*****including Himamaylan City									
******including Kabankalan City and Sipalay City									
REGION VII									
1 Bohol	1st Class	10	3*	3	4				
*including Tagbilaran City									
2 Cebu	1st Class	12	2*	2	2**	2	2***	2****	RA 8553
*including Talisay City									
**including Toledo City									
***including Danao City									
****including Lapu-Lapu City and Mandaue City									
3 Negros Oriental	1st Class	10	3*	4**	3***				
*including Canlaon City									
**including Bais City, Dumaguete City and Tanjay City									
***including Bayawan City									
4 Siquijor	4th Class	8	4	4					
REGION VIII									
1 Biliran	4th Class	8	4	4					
2 Leyte	1st Class	10	2*	2	2	2	2		
*including Tacloban City									
3 Eastern Samar	2nd Class	10	5	5					
4 Northern Samar	2nd Class	10	5	5					
5 Samar	2nd Class	10	5*	5					
*including Calbayog City									
6 Southern Leyte	3rd Class	4	4*	4					
*including Maasin City									
REGION IX									
1 Zamboanga del Norte	1st Class	10	2*	4**	4				
*including Dapitan City									
**including Dipolog City									
2 Zamboanga del Sur	1st Class	10	5*	5					
*including Pagadian City									
3 Zamboanga Sibugay	1st Class	10	5	5					
REGION X									
1 Bukidnon	1st Class	10	3	4*	3				
*including Malaybalay City and Valencia City									
2 Camiguin	4th Class	8	4	4					
3 Lanao del Norte	2nd Class	10	4	6					
4 [redacted]									
*including Oroquieta City									
*including Ozamis City and Tangub City									
5 Misamis Oriental	1st Class	10	5*	5					
*including Gingoog City									
REGION XI									
1 Compostela Valley	1st Class	10	5	5					RA 8470
2 Davao del Norte	1st Class	10	5	5*					
*including Island Garden City of Samal Tagum City & Panabo City									
3 Davao Oriental	2nd Class	10	5	5					
4 Davao del Sur	1st Class	10	5*	5					
*including Digos City									

ANNEX B

Records and Statistics Division, ERSD

Number of Seats of Sangguniang Panlalawigan

May 10, 2004 National and Local Elections

REGION/PROVINCE	Classification of Province	TOTAL	1st District	2nd District	3rd District	4th District	5th District	6th District	Remarks
REGION XII									
1 North Cotabato	1st Class	10	5	5*					
*including Kidapawan City									
2 [redacted]									
3 South Cotabato	2nd Class	10	3	7*					
*Koronadal City									
4 Sultan Kudarat	2nd Class	8	5*	5					
*including Tacurong City									
REGION XIII									
1 **Agusan del Norte**	**2nd Class**	**10**	**5**	**5**					
2 Agusan del Sur	1st Class	10	5	5					
3 Surigao del Norte	2nd Class	10	5	5*					
*including Surigao City									
4 Surigao del Sur	2nd Class	10	5	5*					
*including Bislig City									
ARMM									
1 Basilan	3rd Class	8	4	4					
2 **Lanao del Sur**	**1st Class**	**10**	**5***	**5**					
*including Marawi City									
3 Maguindanao	2nd Class	10	5	5					
4 Sulu	3rd Class	8	4	4					
5 Tawi-tawi	4th Class	8	4	4					

Records and Statistics Division ERSD

ANNEX C

Number of Seats of Sangguniang Panglunsod

May 10, 2004 National and Local Elections

REGION	PROVINCE	Cities whose voters *do not participate* in the election for provincial officials	Cities whose voters *participate in the* election for provincial officials	DISTRICT APPORTIONMENT Total	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Remarks
NCR											
		City of Manila (6 LD)		36	6	6	6	6	6	6	
		Quezon City (4 LD)		24	6	6	6	6			
		Kalookan City (2 LD)		12	6	6					
		Pasay City (1 LD)		12	6	6					
		Mandaluyong City (1LD)		12	6	6					
		Pasig City (1 LD)		12	6	6					
		Marikina City (1 LD)		12	6	6					
		Las Piñas City (1 LD)		12	6	6					
		Valenzuela City (2 LD)		12	6	6					RA 8526
		Malabon City		12	6	6					RA 9019
		Makati City (2 LD)		16	8	8					MR No. 2930, 9/8/07
		Muntinlupa City (1 LD)		16	8	8					MR No. 01-0768
		Parañaque City (2 LD)		**16**	**8**	**8**					**RA 8507/RA 9229**
CAR											
	BENGUET										
		Baguio City (1 LD)		12							
REGION I											
	ILOCOS NORTE										
			Laoag City	10							
	ILOCOS SUR										
			Candon City	10							RA 9018
			Vigan City	10							RA 8988
	LA UNION										
			San Fernando City	12							RA 8509
	PANGASINAN										
		Dagupan City*		10							
			Alaminos City	10							RA 9025
			San Carlos City	10							
			Urdaneta City	10							RA 8480
REGION II											
	CAGAYAN										
			Tuguegarao City	12							RA 8455
	ISABELA										
		Santiago City*		10							Min Res 2757
			Cauayan City	10							RA 9017
REGION III											
	BATAAN										
			Balanga City	10							RA 8984
	BULACAN										
			San Jose del Monte City (1LD)	**12**	**6**	**6**					**RA 8797/RA 9230**
			City of Malolos	**10**							**Petition of Protest** Res. On 10 8 02
	NUEVA ECIJA										
			Cabanatuan City	10							
			Gapan City	**10**							**RA 9022 Aug/25, '01**
			Palayan City	10							
			San Jose City	10							
			Science City of Muñoz	10							RA 8977
	PAMPANGA										
		Angeles City*		10							
			San Fernando City	10							
	TARLAC										
			Tarlac City	10							RA 8593
	ZAMBALES										
		Olongapo City*		10							
REGION IV-A											
	BATANGAS										
			Batangas City	10							
			Lipa City	10							
			Tanauan City	10							RA 9005
	CAVITE										
			Cavite City	10							
			Tagaytay City	10							
			Trece Martires City	10							
	LAGUNA										
			Calamba City	10							RA 9024
			San Pablo City	10							
	QUEZON										
			Lucena City	10							
	RIZAL										
			Antipolo City (1LD)	**16**	**8**	**8**					**RA 8508 / RA 9232**
REGION IV-B											
	ORIENTAL MINDORO										
			Calapan City	10							RA 8475
	PALAWAN										
			Puerto Princesa City	10							
REGION V											
	ALBAY										
			Ligao City	10							RA 9008
			Legaspi City	10							
			Tabaco City	10							RA 9040
	CAMARINES SUR										
			Iriga City	10							
		Naga City*		10							
	MASBATE										
			Masbate City	10							RA 8807
	SORSOGON										
			Sorsogon City	12	4	4	4				RA 8806
REGION VI											
	CAPIZ										
			Roxas City	10							
	ILOILO										
		Iloilo City (1 LD)		12							
			Passi City	10							RA 8469
	NEGROS OCC										
		Bacolod City (1 LD)		12							
			Bago City	10							
			Cadiz City	10							
			Escalante City	10							RA 9014
			Himamaylan City	10							RA 9028
			Kabankalan City	10							
			La Carlota City	10							
			Sagay City	10							

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Records and Statistics Division, ERSD

ANNEX C

Number of Seats of Sangguniang Panglunsod

May 10, 2004 National and Local Elections

REGION	PROVINCE	Cities whose voters do not participate in the election for provincial officials	Cities whose voters participate in the election for provincial officials	DISTRICT APPORTIONMENT Total	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Remarks
			San Carlos City	10							
			Silay City	10							
			Sipalay City	10							RA 9027
			Talisay City	10							RA 8489
			Victorias City	10							RA 8488
REGION VII											
	BOHOL										
			Tagbilaran City	10							
	CEBU										
		Cebu City (2 LD)		16	8	8					
			Danao City	10							
			Lapu-Lapu City	10							
			Mandaue City	10							
			Talisay City	10							RA 8979
			Toledo City	10							
	NEGROS ORIENTAL										
			Bais City	10							
			Bayawan City	10							RA 8983
			Dumaguete City	10							
			Canlaon City	10							
			Tanjay City	10							RA 9015
REGION VIII											
	LEYTE										
		Ormoc City*		10							
			Tacloban City	10							
	SAMAR										
			Calbayog	12	6	6					
	SOUTHERN LEYTE										
			Maasin City	10							RA 8796
REGION IX											
	BASILAN										
			Isabela City	10							RA 9023
	ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE										
			Dapitan City	10							
			Dipolog City	10							
	ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR										
			Pagadian City	10							
		Zamboanga City (1 LD)		12							
REGION X											
	BUKIDNON										
			Malaybalay City	10							RA 8490
			Valencia City	10							RA 8985
	MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL										
			Oroquieta City	10							
			Ozamis City	10							
			Tangub City	10							
	MISAMIS ORIENTAL										
		Cagayan de Oro (1 LD)		12							
			Gingoog City	10							
	LANAO DEL NORTE										
		Iligan City*		10							

Records and Statistics Division, ERSD

ANNEX C

Number of Seats of Sangguniang Panglunsod

May 10, 2004 National and Local Elections

REGION	PROVINCE	Cities whose voters do not participate in the election for provincial officials	Cities whose voters participate in the election for provincial officials	DISTRICT APPORTIONMENT Total	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Remarks
REGION XI											
	DAVAO DEL NORTE										
			Tagum City	10							RA 8472
			Is. Garden City of Samal	12	4	4	4				RA 8471
			Panabo City	10							RA 9026
	DAVAO DEL SUR										
		Davao City (3 LD)		24	8	8	8				
			Digos City	10							RA 8798
REGION XII											
	COTABATO										
			City of Kidapawan	10							RA 8500
	SOUTH COTABATO										
		Gen Santos City*		12							
			Koronadal City	10							RA 8803
	SULTAN KUDARAT										
			Tacurong City	10							RA 8805
REGION XIII											
	AGUSAN DEL NORTE										
		Butuan City*		10							
	SURIGAO DEL NORTE										
			Surigao City	10							
	SURIGAO DEL SUR										
			City of Bislig	10							RA 8804
ARMM											
	LANAO DEL SUR										
			Marawi City	10							
	MAGUINDANAO										
		Cotabato City*		10							

* does not participate in the election for provincial officials but vote for member of the HR

Records and Statistics Division, ERSD

ANNEX D

Number of Seats of Sangguniang Bayan

May 10, 2004 National and Local Elections

REGION/PROVINCE/ MUNICIPALITY	Classification	District Apportionment Total	1st District	2nd District	Remarks
NAT'L CAPITAL REGION					
Navotas	1st Class	12	6	6	
Pateros	4th Class	12	6	6	RA 7887
San Juan (1LD)	1st Class	12	6	6	
Taguig (1LD)	1st Class	12	6	6	

NOTE: All other municipalities outside Metro Manila including the newly created municipalities of Maguindanao namely: Sultan Mastura, Datu Abdullah Sanki, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Paglat and Guindulungan, shall each have 8 councilors to be elected at large.

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The Pet Pantry Marikina
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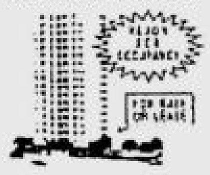

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2% w/o Taking Car 7262780

2% w/oTaking Car 7221021

2% w/oTaking Car 8870490/95

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BUSN DRS OFW 524-3197

1.5% 1HR CAR LOAN3743803

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EDUCATION PLANS 780-0106

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late MARIANO O. LIMJUCO was extrajudicially settled with self adjudication by his sole heir MARINA LIMJUCO PERALEJO as per Doc. No. 2; Page No. 31; Book No. XIV; Series of 2004 before Notary Public Atty. Renato Ambrosio L. Peralejo of Quezon City.
(PDI-March 4, 11 &18,2004)

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JOB HIRING 09167054572 AINA

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OFC MKTG AST 09203562010 IRA

OFC MKTG STAFF Start Agad w/pay 7498760/4217569 7838739/09183076888Adan

Ofc/Mrktng Stf 09205673415

PERSONAL

PRAYER TO BLESSED MOTHER
(NEVER KNOWN TO FAIL)
Oh most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this necessity. Oh star of the sea, help me and show herein you are my Mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech You from the bottom of My Heart to succor me in this necessity. There are none that can withstand Your power. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recoursed to thee (3x). Holy Mother, I place this course in your hands (3x). Sweet Mother, I place this course in Your hands (3x). Holy Spirit, You who solve all problems so that I can attain my goal. You who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances in my life You are with me. I want this short prayer. Thank you for all things as I confirm once again that I never want to be separated from You in eternal glory. Thank you for Your mercy towards me and mine. The person must say this prayer 3 consecutive days. After 3 days the request will be granted. This prayer must be published after the favor is granted.

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

March 9, 2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. Contract Code : **Sp03.LB.Lr-0002**
Title : **Construction, Erection and Installation 1x100 MVA Power Transformer at Labrador Substation**
Location : **Barangay Gonzalo, Labrador, Pangasinan**
Contract Duration : **One Hundred Fifty (150) Calendar Days**

2. The works to be completed by the successful bidder shall consist of furnishing all superintendence, labor, materials, supplies, tools and equipment (except materials, and equipment specified to be furnished by TRANSCO), to complete the Construction, Erection and Installation of 230 & 69 kV Substation Equipment for LABRADOR Substation in accordance with the Plans and Specifications.

3. The Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid is **THIRTEEN MILLION SIX HUNDRED TWENTY EIGHT THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED EIGHTY TWO PESOS (PhP 13,628,682.00)** from the Internal Cash Generation (ICG) of National Transmission Corporation (TransCo).

4. Application for Eligibility is open to contractors with 115 kV minimum construction experience who have the legal, technical and financial requisites of the contract/project to be bid with the following License and Registration Particulars:
License : **"Category B - Specialty: Electrical Works"**
Registration : **"Medium A - Specialty: Electrical Works"**

5. Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria and only Eligible Bidders shall be invited by Transco in the bidding. All bids equal to or lower than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be evaluated based on the responsiveness of the contractor's offer to the contract under bidding subject to Postqualification before an award is made. Bid Prices submitted higher than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be rejected and returned outright.

6. Eligibility Documents and Forms will be available for issuance on **March 11, 2004**, at the Bids and Contracts Management Department, National Transmission Corporation, Ground Floor, Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City 1104, Telefax No.: 921-2308, Email: rvalejandro@transco.ph, upon presentation of Letter of Intent, Contractor's License and a payment of non-refundable fee of Php 1,000.00 per copy.

7. Deadline for submission of duly accomplished Application for Eligibility, Forms, documents and statements shall be **on or before April 2, 2004**, and shall be submitted at the registration office and address mentioned above. If the date is a non-working day or declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be moved to the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted.

8. Contractor, not yet included in the Transco's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility checking, are requested to register with the registration office mentioned above by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated at least once a year. A Certificate of Registration will be issued to contractors upon approval.
   - Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) business name registration or Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) registration certificate, as appropriate;
   - Mayor's permit and/or municipal license for the current year;
   - Taxpayer's Identification Number;
   - Notarized statement of the prospective bidder that it is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by the Government or any of its agencies, offices, corporations and LGU's, including non-inclusion in the Consolidation Blacklisting Report issued by the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB);
   - Audited financial statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions, for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing, among others, the prospective bidder's total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt of payment;
   - Contractor's License.

9. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids or request for registration without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.

10. The Contract to be bid shall be governed by the provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

11. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) **DOMINADOR S. GEONZON**
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - March 11 & 17, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Regional Field Unit No. 6, Iloilo City
Tel. no: 3378812 • 3373549 • 3376006 Telefax: 3364219

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Department of Agriculture, Regional Field Unit No. 6, Iloilo City invites all interested dealers/suppliers of fertilizers to apply for Eligibility and to Bid for the procurement of the following items:

4,397 bags	46-0-0 (Urea)
879 bags	Complete Fertilizer (14-14-14)
586 bags	Di-ammonium Phosphate (16-20-0)
5,862 bags	

Allocation/Distribution by Province:

Aklan	-	1,582 bags	Urea
Antique	-	938 bags	Urea
Capiz	-	879 bags	Urea
Guimaras	-	60 bags	Urea
Iloilo	-	938 bags	Urea
Neg. Occ.	-	879 bags	14-14-14
		586 bags	16-20-0

Approved Budget P2,931,000.00
Minimum Required Bid Security: 73,275.00

The following are the related activities and schedule:

• Deadline for submission of Letter of Intent & Eligibility Requirements	March 24, 2004 not later than 5:00 p.m.
• Issuance of Bid documents	March 26, 2004
• Pre Bid Conference	April 6, 2004 9:00 a.m. DA War Room
• Deadline for Submission of Bids	April 20, 2004 9:30 a.m. DA War Room
• Opening of Bids	April 20, 2004 10:00 a.m. DA War Room

Bid proposals exceeding the stated Approved Budget shall be rejected outright.
All Bids shall be marked "DO NOT OPEN BEFORE (date & time of opening of Bids)" and addressed as follows:

The Chairman, BAC
Department of Agriculture RFU6
Parola, Iloilo City
Bid. No. 2004-04

The Department of Agriculture reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive defects or formality therein, and accept responsive proposals most advantageous to the government and assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify any bidders for expenses and losses that may be incurred in the preparation of Bids nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) ENGR. RICARDO D. OBLENA, CESO III
Regional Executive Director

(PDI--March 11 & 17, 2004)

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation
Visayas-Operation and Maintenance
Banilad Power Complex, Nasipit, Talamban C.C.
Tel. No. 346-3427 346-9449

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY AND TO BID
AD NO. TRANS-VIS-2004-02

Pre-bid Conference : March 16, 2004 @ 1:30PM at the District 2 Office
Bidding Dates : March 30, 2004 @ 2:00 PM at the District 2 Office

The National Transmission Corporation, Bids and Awards Committee – Visayas invites interested parties to apply for eligibility and to submit sealed bids on **(pls. see above schedule)** to be opened publicly at Transco Bidding Room, Banilad Power Complex, Nasipit, Talamban, Cebu City for the following requirements:

PR NO.	DESCRIPTION	QTY /um	APPROVED BUDGET (ABC) (In pesos)
D2CB-2004-037	Repair of 50 MV AR shunt reactor at Talisay S/S Daan Bantayan, Cebu	1 lot	20,000,000.00

All Bids should be within the Approved Budget of Contract to be Bid in order to qualify. Bidding will be a three envelope system on a per Purchase Requisition (PR) basis.

Eligibility forms and bidding documents are available starting **March 4, 2004,** at the Materials Management Services Section from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday to Friday, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php500.00/schedule and presentation of TIN/Supplier's Number (DCE). Last day of issuance of bidding documents will be a day before the opening of bids.

Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution. The procurement rules and regulations used in this transaction shall be in accordance with the Implementing Rules and Regulations – A of Republic Act 9184. Source of funding is from Internal Cash Generation of Transco.

The Corporation reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, waive any defects therein and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at anytime prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of BAC's action.

For further inquiries, please contact the BAC Secretariat thru telephone number (032) 346-9449 or fax number (032) 346-3427.

(Sgd.) OCTAVIO G. BRIONES
Chairman, BAC

(PDI-March 4 & 11, 2004)

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NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIDDING

The National Food Authority (NFA) wishes to announce that it will be conducting a bidding on April 02, 2004 at 10:00 AM at the NFA Food Development Center, FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila among all interested corn suppliers for the supply of maximum THREE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND (350,000 MT), with an appropriated budget from NFA's corporate resources of FOUR BILLION PESOS (Php4.0 BILLION), Yellow Corn equivalent to US Grade No. 2 or better, of Omnibus Origin, in bulk or in bags, which should arrive at designated Philippine port within April-June 2004.

Minimum volume to be offered per supplier shall be 10,000 MT. All interested corn suppliers are required to submit price offers in US PMT, CFR, FO; CIF FOW/FOS,1 safe port, 1-2 safe berths, under the following modes of payment:

Documents against Payment (D/P, or
Documents against Acceptance (D/A)

All bidders are required to post a bid bond equivalent to 5% of the value offered in the form of Cashier's and/or Manager's Check issued by a reputable bank in Metro Manila or an irrevocable stand-by L/C issued by a reputable commercial bank or in the case of an irrevocable stand-by L/C issued by a foreign bank, the same shall be confirmed by a reputable local bank.

Winning bidders are required to submit a performance bond equivalent to 5% of the value of the awarded quantity within three (3) banking days after receipt of the Notice of Award in the form of Cashier's and/or Manager's Check issued by a reputable bank in Metro Manila or an irrevocable stand-by Irrevocable L/C issued by a foreign bank, the same shall be confirmed by a reputable local bank. Bid bond can be converted to Performance Bond.

Certificate of Registration (COR) issued by the Bid and Awards Committee (BAC) is required from all prospective bidders. List of Registration and Eligibility Requirements, Terms of Reference and Instruction to Bidders may be secured from the BAC Supplemental Secretariat, 5th Flr., NFA Matimyas Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Quezon City starting March 04, 2004.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) and Bid Documents will be available starting March 04 up to March 12, 2004 (8:00 AM-5:00 PM) upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php5,000.00.

The **Pre-Bidding** conference will be held on **March 19, 2004**, at **2:00 PM at the NFA Food Development Center, FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila.**

Submission of the bid together with the bid bond will be between 8:00 AM to 9:55 AM at NFA Food Development Center, FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila on **April 02, 2004. Opening of bids** will start at exactly **10:00 AM.**

Suppliers who have been issued COR for the supply of imported corn for year 2004 by the NFA-BAC shall be eligible to join the bidding.

The National Food Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, to waive any required or defect therein and accept the bid/s which is deemed most advantageous to the Agency.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. ARTHUR C. YAP**
Administrator, NFA

(PDI–March 4 & 11, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Masbate
City of Masbate

Loan Agreement # PH-P200

INVITATION TO BID

The Republic of the Philippines, through the Department of Education, has received an Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) in the amount of P1,749 million (Y7,210 million) towards the financing of the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project (SEDIP) dated December 28, 1999. It is intended that part of the proceeds on this loan will be applied to eligible payments for the new construction and/or repair of different school buildings located at MASBATE NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL (MNCHS), MASBATE CITY MASBATE. Disbursement of the ODA loan by JBIC will be subject, in all respects, to the terms and conditions of the Loan agreement, including the disbursement procedures and the "Guidelines for Procurement under "JBIC ODA Loans." No party other than the Department of Education shall derive any rights from the Loan Agreement or have any claims to loan proceeds. The above Loan Agreement will cover only a part of the project cost. As for the remaining portion, the agency will take appropriate measures for finance.

JBIC requires that bidders and contractors, as well as DepEd-SEDIP under contracts funded with JBIC ODA loans and other Japanese ODA, observe the highest standard of ethics during the procurement and execution of such contracts. In pursuance of this policy, JBIC: 1. will reject a proposal for award if it determines that the bidder recommended for award has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent practices in competing for the contract in question; 2. will recognize a contractor as ineligible, for a stated period of time, to be awarded a contract funded with JBIC ODA loans if it, at any time, determines that the contractor has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent practices in competing for, or in executing, another contract financed by JBIC ODA loans or other Japanese ODA.

Bidding is open to Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) registered contractors or joint venture contractors with PCAB license category A with classification Medium, General Building. The approved budget will be announced during the Pre-bid conference.

Bidders may obtain further information and acquire the bidding documents from:

The Bids and Awards Committee
City of Masbate
Tel. No.: 333-5954
Telefax No.: 333-5035

A complete set of bidding documents may be purchase by interested eligible bidders starting March 09, 2004 until 5:00 P.M. of March 22, 2004 upon submission of a letter of intent to the above office and payment of a non-refundable of Three Thousand (P3,000.00) Pesos.

Pre-bid conference shall be conducted on March 23, 2004 at 2:00 P.M to be held at the Conference Room, Office of the City Mayor, City of Masbate.

Submission of bid together with all the documents required in the bid documents must be delivered to the aforesaid venue on March 30, 2004 at 10:00 A.M. at the Conference Room, Office of the City Mayor, City of Masbate. All bids will be opened immediately thereafter in the presence of the bidders or their legally authorized representatives.

(Sgd.) **BERNARDITA S. DALANON**
City General Services Officer
BAC Chairman

(PDI – March 6, 11 & 18, 2004)

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NOTICE

Effective March 15, 2004, you may contact the National Transmission Corporation Head Office through this trunkline number:

(02) 981-2100

(connecting all departments)

Corporate Communication
981-2143/926-1844
Bids & Contracts Management
981-2213
Purchasing
981-2206 / 981-2207
Sub-transmission Divestment
921-4231 / 920-0102

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

Serving the nation thru reliable grid operation

Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road,
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
Website: www.transco.ph
E-mail: corpcomm@transco.ph

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Eastern Samar
Municipality of Balangiga
TeleFax No. (055) 578-3018

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY & TO BID

1. Name of Project Construction of Balangiga Water Supply System (Level III)
   Location : Balangiga, Eastern Samar
   Contract Duration . 180 Calendar Days
2. The works to be completed by the successful bidder shall consist of Reservoir Facilities, Chlorination Facility, Reservoir Development, Administrative Building, Transmission & Distribution Facilities, Fire Hydrants, Household Meters & Rehabilitation Works.
3. The Approved Budget for the Contract to bid is P22,157,889 58, from JBIC Pipelined thru Land Bank of the Philippines
4. Application for Eligibility is open to contractors with at least "Medium B Category" – Water Supply.
5. Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria and only Eligible Bidders shall be invited by LGU of Balangiga in the bidding. Eligibility requirements shall be based on the provisions of the IRR of R.A. 9184 otherwise known as "Government Procurement Reform Act."

Schedule of Activities:

Particular	Date	Venue
Issuance of Eligibility Requirements & Bid Documents	March 18 to 19, 2004	Engineer's Office, Municipal Bldg., Balangiga, E. Samar
Submission of Pre-qualification Documents	March 23, 2004	SB – Session Hall, Mun. Bldg., Balangiga, E. Samar
Pre-qualification	March 24, 2004	SB–Session Hall, Mun Bldg., Balangiga, E. Samar
Pre-Bid Conference	March 30, 2004	-do-
Submission of Sealed Bids	April 12, 2004 (not later than 10 00 a.m.)	-do-
Opening of Bids	April 12, 2004 At 2 00 p.m.	-do-

6. Bidding Documents will be available at the Municipal's Engineer's Office upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php 5,000 00.
7. This Bidding shall be governed by the Implementing Rules & Regulations of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act."
8. The LGU Balangiga reserves the right to reject any application for Eligibility or all bids or request for registration without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
9. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) **MARILOU C. BAJADO**
Chairman Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI–March 11 & 17, 2004)

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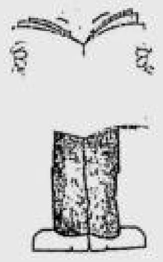

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CAGELCO II

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

The Cagayan II Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CAGELCO II) is inviting all interested bidders to pre-qualify and to bid for the following materials and equipment:

WOOD/CONCRETE POLES AND CONDUCTORS

To be qualified, bidder must have fully complied with the following.

1) Accreditation requirements: (for submission to PBAC Chairman, Mrs. Blandina Y. Madamba)
   a) Company Profile
   b) Business Registration
   c) Business Permit
   d) BIR/VAT Certificate
   e) Latest Income Tax Return (ITR)
   f) List of Clients for a period of 3 years, if applicable
2) Must be able to pay P2,000.00 (for this particular bidding only and not refundable) for the bid documents during the pre-bidding conference.

CAGELCO II reserves the right to reject any/or all bid without any reason, waive any formality therein, accept proposal most advantageous to the cooperative and assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify any bidder for expenses or, losses that may be incurred in the preparation of bid nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

Pre-bid conference and bidding schedule shall be informed to all qualified bidders through fax and mails.

Deadline of submission of requirements - March 19, 2004

(Sgd.) **Gabriel A. Tordesillas**
General Manager

Note: For the extension of laterals lines for the following areas.
1 Silangan, Allacapan, Cagayan
2 Tamalunog, Flora, Apayao
3 Zimay, Paddaya, Aparri
4 Zone 4, 5 & 6. Callao, Gonzaga

Source of fund: 2002 National Electrification Administration (NEA) Subsidy.

(PDI–Mar. 4 & 11, 2004)

ERRATUM

In the Recruitment Ad of SM Shoemart for its Operations, Support and Administrative Group published in this paper March 7, 2004 (Job Market Section) the address for its Marilao branch was inadvertently omitted. Interested applicants for Marilao are hereby advised to apply personally from Monday to Friday 9AM to 3PM or send their comprehensive resumé with photo to:

SM Marilao Department Store
Human Resources Division
Mc. Arthur Highway Lias, Marilao, Bulacan

Our apologies

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☎ 8114361 ☎ 8114370 ☎ 8114012 Fax 8925578
ST. ANTHONY'S BLDG., AURORA BLVD., QUEZON CITY
☎ 912-9008-11 Fax 912-9011
SM MEGAMALL, MANDALUYONG CITY
☎ 6350219 ☎ 6872354 ☎ 6872366 Fax 6350220
G/F TRINITY BLDG., 636 T.M. KALAW ST., ERMITA, MANILA
☎ 5273342 ☎ 522-4406 ☎ 5276357 Fax 5280213
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The Management & Staff
of
FOWNES BROTHERS
Group of Companies

wishes to announce the death of

HELMUT S. DOSCH

Consultant and Former President

His remains lie in state at Capilla de San Francisco, Sanctuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City.

Interment will be on Friday, March 12, 2004 after the celebration of the 4:00 p.m. Holy Mass at the Sanctuario de San Antonio.

HELMUT S. DOSCH

A friend of the Philippines for 35 years

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on March 8, 2004 at the age of 69.

His bereaved wife **MA. LOURDES**, and daughters **REBECCA** and **JESSICA** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Capilla de San Francisco, Sanctuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City.

Interment will be on Friday, March 12, 2004 after the celebration of the 4:00 p.m. Holy Mass at the Sanctuario de San Antonio.

IN LOVING MEMORY

On the First Death Anniversary of

DRA. RUTH LAVARIAS-SANTOS

August 30, 1935 – March 11, 2003

Her loving husband,
Dr. Rufino V. Santos and family
request relatives and friends to join
in prayer for the eternal repose of her soul.

Holy Masses will be offered today
March 11, 2004 at 6:30 a.m.
at the following churches:

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish
Maysilo, Malabon City

Immaculate Concepcion Parish
Concepcion, Malabon City

National Shrine of the Divine Mercy
Marilao, Bulacan

National Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes
Quezon City

Redemptorist Church
Baclaran, Pasay City

"Let the words of my mouth meet your Favor, keep the thoughts of my heart before you, Lord, my rock, my redeemer..." – Psalm 21:15

"I am the resurrection and life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever believes in Me will never die."

John 11:25-26

Hon. MANUEL "MANING" PINEDA DUMATOL

(Retired Judge)

Died in the Grace of our Lord
on March 9, 2004 at the age of 72.

His bereaved wife **LODY (nee Salvador)**; children **NOLI & CITAS, EDWIN, JOLYN & ED, JENNIFER & VIVEN**; and grandchildren **ALLYSA, AJ, NICO, NASH, NEIL, HANS, BEA & SAI**, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be announced later.

Hercules "Butch" S. M- Ibarra, Jr.

(of Fairview Park, Quezon City)

Peacefully joined our Lord on March 9, 2004
on the eve of his 66th birthday.

H[illegible] loving wife **Cristina R. Galang**; daughters **Gigette & Gilda**; son-in-law **Don Tejada**; granddaughter **Darla**; his siblings & their spouses **Linda & Boni, Eden & Oscar, Manuel & Fely, Romy & Bonnel, Efren & Margie, Dante & Mercy**, and **Leandro & Tita**; mother-in-law **Elisa R. Galang** and all relatives and friends request prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on March 13, 2004 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

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• DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS
• DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS

FLORA ECO NUESA

Wife of the late **Atty. Dominador P. Nuesa**

Peacefully passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on March 10, 2004 at the age of 84.

Her bereaved children: **Linda N. Dacanay, Atty. Wilfredo E. Nuesa** and **Mario E. Nuesa,** son-in-law **Chito E. Dacanay**, daughters-in-law **Sherisa P. Nuesa & Jessie V. Nuesa**, grandchildren and their spouses **Randy, Taddy & Delia, Jen-jen & Allan, Richie & Vicky, Florence & Jon-jon, Lanie & Erwin, Sherwil, Dominic, Jay-jay, Jong-jong & Vicky,** and great grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the St. Jerome Parish Church, Alabang, Muntinlupa City (located beside the Alabang Town Center). Mass will be offered every 8:00 in the evening.

Interment will be on Saturday, March 13, 2004 at the Manila Memorial Park in Sucat, Parañaque City after the 8:00 AM Mass in St. Jerome Parish Church.

In lieu of flowers, you may want to donate to the Church of the Poor Apostolate Foundation of St. James the Great Parish in Ayala Alabang Village, Muntinlupa City.

"I can fly higher than an eagle,
for you are the wind beneath my wings."

The DEL ROSARIO family
Anacleto (†) and **Juanita** (†);
Marilou and **Boy de Borja**; **Boydel** (†) and **Mahloi**; **Maritess** and **Toti** (†) **Bo-ot**; **Pepito** (†); **Anacleto Jr.** and **Abigail**; **Betty**; **BeAnn** and **Rico Anonas**; and **Boboy**

condoles with the family of

MILCA ESPINAS-CHAVEZ

home companion for 55 years, confidante, ally and friend
who peacefully rejoined our Lord on March 9, 2004 at the age of 80.

We join her loving husband **Vicente**; only child **Jesus** and daughter-in-law **Letlet**; grandsons **Kevin** and **Kenneth**; relatives, friends and loved ones in their time of difficulty and ask pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her cremated remains lie in state at their residence in
Lot 9, Block 6 Neptune St., Satelliteville, Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Interment will be announced later.

BUSINESS

Japan cuts Q4 GDP estimate to 6.4%

TOKYO—Japan unexpectedly cut its economic growth figures for the final three months of 2003 on Wednesday but it was still the best performance in 13 years and economists said an export-led recovery was intact.

Japan's economy grew a real 1.6 percent in October-December from the previous quarter, the government said, revising its initial reading of 1.7 percent released in mid-February.

It also cut the annualized growth rate to 6.4 percent from 7 percent.

The revisions confounded expectations that a new input of strong capital spending figures would result in an upward revision to gross domestic product (GDP).

Economists said a downward revision in inventories was behind the lower-than-expected growth in GDP, the broadest measure of economic activity.

But most said this did not dent the outlook for what is perceived as Japan's most promising economic recovery since the big downturn in the early 1990s.

The growth rate outstripped that of the US economy, which expanded at an annualized 4.1 percent in the same quarter.

The euro-zone economy grew 0.3 percent in the fourth quarter from the previous quarter and rose 0.9 percent year-on-year.

Growth in Japan's capital spending, boosted by improved earnings at export-oriented manufacturing firms, was revised to 6.3 percent from an initial reading of 5.1 percent.

Private-sector inventories became a net negative contributor to GDP by 0.3 percent, against zero in the initial reading.

"Capital spending was revised upwards, which is a good sign. Inventories have dropped but that was mainly caused by rising demand," said Tatsushi Shikano of UFJ Institute.

Reuters

US economy to grow 4.7% in 2004, survey says

WASHINGTON—The US economy will grow 4.7 percent this year, according to an influential poll of economists, which also said soaring energy prices have begun to feed into forecasts for inflation.

The latest monthly Blue Chip Economic Indicators poll, closely watched by US policymakers, raised its gross domestic product forecast slightly from 4.6 percent in February.

The 2005 estimate was lifted by the same amount to 3.8 percent, with economists confident that domestic demand will continue to support the economy as the drag from net exports fades, thanks in part to the weaker dollar.

"The consensus forecast of above-trend real GDP growth throughout this year and next is primarily based on the twin assumptions that consumer spending will stay relatively solid while the strong rebound in business investment that began last year continues to gather momentum," the survey said.

The poll, often cited by the Federal Reserve as a benchmark of market expectations, saw strong gains in real disposable income in 2004 anchoring a 3.7-percent rise in personal consumption expenditure—which accounts for the bulk of GDP.

But it cautioned this optimism stemmed from economists' assumptions about large tax refunds which had not yet materialized, plus faith that the jobs market will improve.

The country's February payrolls employment fell well below expectations with just 21,000 new jobs added. Wall Street had expected a number around 125,000.

The Fed says strong growth will eventually generate more job creation once gains in productivity fade. But successive months of weak employment data risk upsetting consumer confidence and could sap strong household spending.

Economists' consensus estimates for the overall consumer price index (CPI) jumped to an annualized 2.6 percent for the first quarter and were raised by 0.2 percentage points to 1.8 percent for 2004 as a whole.

Reuters

Chinese industry up in Feb.

BEIJING—Chinese industrial output surged in February, picking up speed after the Lunar New Year as factories cranked out everything from metals to electronics in what analysts said may be the peak of production.

Output in February was 23.2 percent higher than the same month a year earlier, up from 19.1 percent growth in the year through January.

February output was up 10.9 percent from January, calculations based on official figures showed.

The latest sign that the world's sixth-biggest economy was still going strong came amid the annual session of the National People's Congress, or parliament, where top leaders outlined plans to cool breakneck economic expansion in favor of more sustainable growth.

The figures were not seasonally adjusted to account for the week-long Lunar New Year holiday, which was in February in 2003 but in January this year.

Analysts had expected February's factory output to rise about 20 percent from a year earlier in seasonally adjusted terms, despite vows by policy-makers to cool the economy, which expanded 9.1 percent in 2003.

Driven by rising incomes that have fueled demand for cars, mobile phones and homes, and by a crush of foreign companies setting up production bases, China's industrial output rose 17 percent last year.

But despite moves to rein in bank lending to industries such as steel, cement and automobiles, annual industrial growth has accelerated in recent months. December output was up 18.1 percent from a year earlier.

As they wolf down huge quantities of raw materials and components, China's industries have also become a key source of growth for other countries, particularly neighbors Japan and South Korea.

"The main drivers of the fast growth in industrial output were the telecommunications equipment and metals sectors," the State Statistical Bureau said in a statement.

Power generation, chemicals, automobiles and machinery also played a big role in the growth, it said. Power output in the first two months was up 15.3 percent from a year earlier, to 306.8 billion kilowatt hours.

"These figures are pretty much in line with my expectations. They show industrial output is still strong," said Rob Subbaraman, regional economist for Lehman Brothers in Tokyo.

Reuters

Argentina strikes deal with IMF on $3.1-B debt

BUENOS AIRES—Argentina and the International Monetary Fund reached an agreement on the repayment of $3.1 billion owed to the global lender, a government official told The Associated Press.

President Nestor Kirchner's government issued the order to make the payment due Tuesday, said the source, who spoke on condition of not being further identified.

Details of the accord were not made public. Neither the IMF nor Kirchner's administration would comment, although the government said it would release a statement Wednesday.

The deal came after days of testy negotiations between Kirchner's government and the Washington-based lending agency.

But the end of the latest confrontation dispelled any investor worries of a possible default and sent Argentine stocks surging.

Argentina's benchmark Merval Index surged 6 percent to close at 1,217.65 on Tuesday, erasing a drop of 4.5 percent over the three previous sessions. The broader General Index also rallied, climbing 4.5 percent to 53,099.

For days, Kirchner had said he would make Argentina's latest debt payment only if the IMF first sent signals it would approve an upcoming report on the nation's economic progress as part of a financial accord the two struck last year.

Argentina is facing its second economic progress report as part of a review of a three-year $13.3-billion loan package arranged with the IMF in the wake of its 2001-2002 economic collapse.

The review, if approved by the IMF's board of directors, would allow Argentina to get back most of the $3.1 billion it was required to pay the IMF by the close of banking on Tuesday.

AP

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The mean machines of 'Torque' /C4

E-mail: pr_motoring@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

Bumgarner: Asia's fastest rising karter

First RP F1 driver could be a woman—the first in F1 history

Text by Tessa R. Salazar
Photos by Ernie U. Sarmiento

IT WAS in August 2003 when the best karters from Asia gathered in Indonesia to pit engines and karting talents against the host country's best karters, who were heavily favored to dominate the races.

Some 60 karters from the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Hong Kong and Indonesia participated in the competitions that saw them burn rubber in two heats and in the trophy race.

The only female

Among the grizzled junior veterans jostling for position was 15-year-old Michele Bumgarner from the Philippines. And all day long she was looking behind at the competition. She was the fastest in the qualifying first race.

Then, on that Sunday when the next two heats would determine the champion, Michele stepped up to a seemingly insurmountable challenge.

She was in pole position before the race, but then her kart's engine abruptly died and couldn't start. A quick fix at the kart's starter got her finally going, but not after the rest of her competitors pushed her to the back.

Methodically, Michele went to work, gradually reclaiming lost ground one kart at a time. In the course of the race, she was able to overtake all 11 karters. On the last lap and in the last turn, she finally took the lead and won it. She had won the hearts of the fans, and the respect of the boys at the pits. She was the only female on the track.

Michele credits her win to her Jedi-like focus on her goal of finishing first. "I knew what I had to do. So I said to myself I was going to do it," she quips.

Michele says she won and lost in many races but accumulated points in the championship's three legs in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia, winning for her the Asian Karting Open Championship in the Junior Intercontinental A Class for 2003 and the year before that.

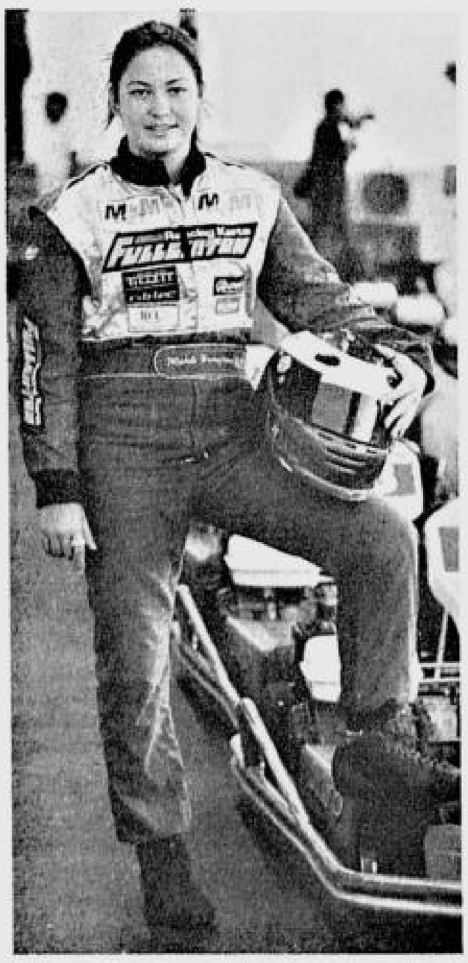
Karter at 9

She has that pleasing face and exotic bloodlines enough to land her in lucrative commercial endorsements, but Bumgarner knew what she wanted at age 9: to be sitting in a go-kart, have fun and run.

Dad Lee Bumgarner shares Michele's dream, and in no time Michele found herself thrust onto the seat of her first go-kart, the hot, noisy engine egging her to step on the gas and start history.

She was not yet serious about it on her first year, says Lee, and placed last but it was only during the later part of the second year that she displayed the potential.

BUMGARNER/ C2



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Per DTI NCR Permit No. 3205 Series of 2003

If you don't own a car, why not rent or lease one?

By Charles E. Buban

THERE is a common public misconception that rental and leasing companies only serve tourists, VIPs, visiting dignitaries and the rest of those so-called high net worth individuals.

Indeed, seeing those individuals riding on chauffeured unmarked sedans or limousines gives a certain air of exclusivity.

But the truth is, these people are just taking advantage of what these rental and leasing companies offer.

Says Nissan Car Lease Philippines Inc. president Leon Herrera: "You ride on or drive a top brand and well-maintained vehicle. If you're leasing it, you are paying for the use of it and not paying for the car itself."

Started in 1992

The NCLPI, which operates under the trade name Nissan-Rent-A-Car/Car Lease and Phone-A-Car, started its operations in 1992 through the collaboration of Nissan Motor Philippines Inc., Marubeni Corp. of Japan, Dragon Transport Resources Inc., and with the participation of Universal Motors Corp.

Today, Nissan Rent-A-Car operates a wide range of transport services such as car rental services, operating lease service, limousine services, airport coupon taxicab service and hotel-based city transfer (coupon taxi service).

"Although we have become very visible in five-star hotels, corporate and commercial establishments, there are now other individuals who have discovered the conveniences of our services," says Herrera.

Best option

He adds that theirs is the best option when there are no taxis to be found (particularly during peak and odd hours) or if one demands premium services for their airport transfers, hourly car hire, drop-off and pick-up services.

"These types of service can be availed of at several five-star hotels where we are the accredited limousine transport operator," says Herrera, noting Nissan Rent-A-Car is one of the top rental car companies in the country with a fleet of 400 vehicles.

Nissan Rent-A-Car can provide its clients with a wide array of vehicles from the high-end limousines such as the Mercedes-Benz S and E Class, Lincoln Stretched Limos and Towncars to Nissan Cefiros, vans, SUVs and compact sedans.

Its transport services—whether point-to-point, hourly, weekly or monthly basis—can be availed of at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1 and 2 and at various Metro Manila Hotels, shopping malls (Shangri-La Plaza Mall in Mandaluyong City), hospitals (Asian Hospital and Medical Center in Alabang) as well as provincial outlets in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, Cagayan de Oro City and Davao City.

"Our advantage is that you don't negotiate with our chauffeur for the fare, instead you pay directly to our counter staff on duty. Rates to destinations within Metro Manila are fixed, paid and receipted at our hotel or airport counters," informs Herrera.

RIDING in an elegant rental car like this one provides a feeling of refinement no other marked taxis can offer.

Less hassle

Apart from corporate clients, car accidents are also fueling the growth of Nissan Rent-A-Car's leasing service.

"Motorists inconvenienced by fender-benders while some would rather leave their car in their garage and lease our vehicles for their business, during weekend and special occasions," shares Herrera.

Leasing is nothing more than a method of paying for the use of a car, truck, SUV or van over a specified period of time.

It's different from renting since you can only rent a vehicle for as little as a day, or even a few hours while leasing typically takes several months, even years.

Common dilemma

Everyone who has ever considered leasing has had this question cross his or her mind: lease or buy, buy or lease, which is better?

"It's a common dilemma but it depends on what's most important to you," says Herrera.

If you want lower monthly payments and like driving a new car, that's always under warranty, every two or three years, but are willing to pay a little more over the long haul to get those benefits, then you should lease.

Leasing is a way to get into a vehicle you could never otherwise afford.

When you lease a vehicle, you are not renting it but arranging for the vehicle to be sold to a leasing company. This leasing company, in return will allow you then to use its vehicle for a monthly fee over a determined period of time.

"It all depends on one's preference but I suggest other individuals out there should try leasing and experience what a number of our clients are enjoying at the moment," he says.

ALONSO celebrates his podium finish in this season's first grand prix.

Mild Seven drives to the podium with new engine

IN ONLY the first race of the season, the Mild Seven Renault F1 Team carved out a third place finish at the Australian Grand Prix (GP) in Albert Park, Melbourne, proving that they are serious in finishing third in this year's constructor's championship.

Unknown to many, this charge toward being included in F1 racing's elite company of three began way, way back, long before the 2004 season started.

For more than a year now, engineers at Enstone and Viry-Châtillon, the two racing development facilities of Mild Seven Renault, have been tediously laboring to get the right mix of components that add up into a race-winning car.

"The car felt really good during the race. It had nice balance, and was easy to drive," described Alonso moments after stepping down from the podium.

As early as March 2003, team officials in charge of technical development for Mild Seven Renault had categorically stated that reliability is the priority for the new RS24 engine.

At the end of the development process, the team arrived at a 72 degree V10 engine that was not only more durable, but also more powerful than its predecessor.

Now more than ever, the relationship between engine and chassis engineers at Viry-Châtillon and Enstone will be crucial, to meet the demands of perfecting the setup and simultaneously preserving the engine life. Based on the early podium finish at Melbourne, it is clear that the Mild Seven Renault technical team is on the right track.

"Honestly, this result is an excellent surprise for the whole team. We finished in front of Williams and McLaren: that wasn't what we had expected! The result does credit to the whole team at both Viry and Enstone: they have worked all hours through the winter to give us a competitive car this weekend," Alonso stressed.

Bumgarner: Asia's fastest rising karter

From page C1

Now at 15, Michele is a six-year veteran of the sport. Her still-growing physique (she's 5'8" and counting) is matched by her growing reputation as a fierce competitor of top Asian junior karters.

At this young age, her trophy cabinet is getting crowded, too. She was named Karter of the Year in 2003 from the Automobile Association of the Philippines (governed by the Federacion Internationale de l'Automobile or FIA), and the same title from Philippine race officials and organizers of the Philippine Karting Association and Carmona Circuit Philippines.

Naturally, her ultimate dream is to make it to F1 someday, just like racing legend Michael Schumacher who started his career in a go-kart.

Motley crew

To fully understand and appreciate Michele and her talent in karting, we had to try and play catch-up with her in an actual karting circuit at Speedzone at The Fort. So, we motoring writers put on our overalls and helmets and closed our mouths shut, because we knew this girl was going to feed us truckloads of dust. Well, at least, we also knew we were about to have lots of fun just being on a go-kart.

This was only my second time to ride a kart, and all I could say was "ouch." When karting, the forces acting on your body are magnified. There is no insulation to protect your ears from the deafening engine noise, no roof or windshield to protect your body from the wind and loose asphalt.

The go-kart, small as it may seem with the power of just 28 horses in its powerplant, can attain speeds in excess of 100 kph on straightaways and inflicts no small punishment on its driver's body on hairpin turns.

Professional karters describe driving the kart as an experience that saps nearly all the energies of the body, especially the arms. They swear you actually feel more of the G-forces at work than racing in regular circuit cars. Your arms and hands would have to hold the body firmly behind the steering wheel all the time.

MICHELE with the motley crew—the author and Philippine Star's Lester Dizon, Andy Leuterio and Manny delos Reyes

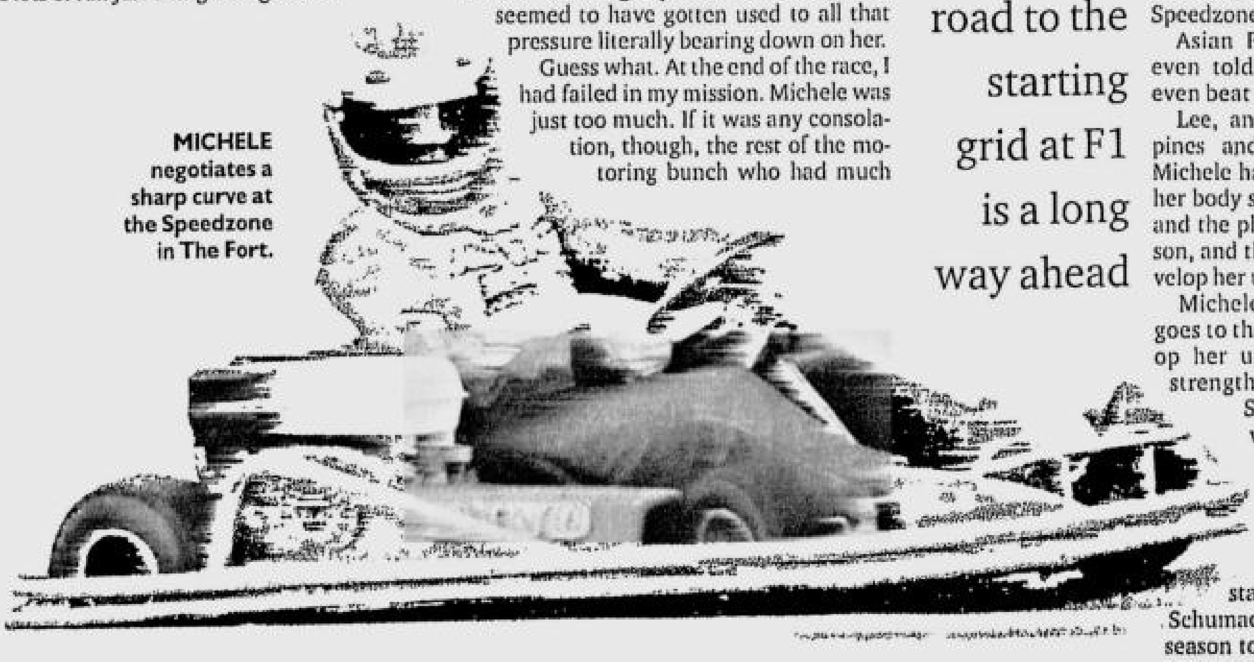
Fitness regimen

To withstand such punishing forces, kart racers have to be physically fit and must undergo a fitness regimen that includes workouts and proper diet.

With no fitness regimen to speak of, and relying on just guts (and a dash of girl pride, perhaps), I threw all caution to the wind and shut all the other noises out, and concentrated on catching up with Michele, who seemed to have gotten used to all that pressure literally bearing down on her.

Guess what. At the end of the race, I had failed in my mission. Michele was just too much. If it was any consolation, though, the rest of the motoring bunch who had much more karting experience than I didn't fare much better. We were all happy losers to this fast and furious looker. I was the happiest loser, though, because in finishing dead last in the heat, I was awarded one free heat at the Speedzone.

Michele knows the road to the starting grid at F1 is a long way ahead


MICHELE negotiates a sharp curve at the Speedzone in The Fort.

Asian Formula 3 champ Pepon Marave even told this writer that Michele would even beat him.

Lee, an American resident in the Philippines and also into racing himself, says Michele had risen up the racing ranks so fast her body still has to catch up with her talents and the physical demands of the karting season, and that she would have to primarily develop her upper body strength.

Michele told the INQUIRER that she now goes to the gym three times a week to develop her upper as well as her lower body strength.

Says Lee: "Michele has come a long way in three years. Two years ago we didn't expect her to be at the top of the sport so quickly. Everybody sees great potential in her.

"All the finest race car drivers started with karting, such as Michael Schumacher. They still go karting every off-season to sharpen their reflexes and to keep the basics of racing in mind."

Long way ahead

Despite Michele's talents all stacked up in her favor, F1 fame is still far from reality, primarily because the road to Formula 1 is paved in gold. Willing sponsors would have to cough out at least $4 million per race season.

Michele's camp, however, believes in the adage "If you build it, they will come." As things stand right now, Asia's fastest junior karter is just waiting for sponsors to come knocking at her door.

Soon, people will see Michele more often behind a bigger steering wheel, as she will also begin to race in full-size cars. She will still participate in kart races for another two years.

Michele knows the road to the starting grid at F1 is a long way ahead. For now, she plans to take it one step at a time. That may mean employing a strategy not unlike what she did in Indonesia. Her sights are set on the world's No. 1 karter Wade Cunningham of New Zealand. "The world's best karter is pretty strong. I have to be stronger than him," she notes.

Wade's trainer Terry Fullerton also trains Michele. A former karting champ himself, Fullerton has trained many F1 drivers.

To be able to carry the hopes and dreams of countless Filipino F1 aficionados, the first Filipino F1 racer must have strong shoulders, indeed. Not to worry, Michele assures us. She's working on it.

Transport Show 2004 starts April 21

TRANS Sport Show 2004, the country's most prestigious and much-awaited annual motoring event is all set to unfold on April 21 at the Megatrade Hall of SM Megamall B, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City.

On its 13th year, the show will pay tribute to the famous Italian marques such as Ferrari, Maserati, Alfa Romeo and Lancia. The show's organizer, TradeShow International Inc. will have a special display of sports and exotic cars belonging to the aforementioned car manufacturers designed by the great stylists from the House of Pininfarina, Bertone and Gandini.

Italians are very famous for producing some of the most beautiful automotive designs that the motoring world has truly ever seen. Some designs have been hailed as a work of art and are permanently displayed in museums around the world.

Open-class car tilt

The event's main highlight, the Trans Sport Show Cup Open Class Car Competition will have approximately 50 of the best restored classic and contemporary cars vying for the much-coveted "Best of Show" award.

Since the inception of Trans Sport Show, the level of competition for the Trans Sport Show Cup has been raised several notches to the point that local car restorers are now considered at par with the best in Asia including Japan.

Another event highlight that is gaining much popularity is the search for Ms Trans Sport Show. Now on its 5th year, the search is open to all promotional girls employed by the different corporate exhibitors for the event. Aside from being good looking, the criteria for judging also include the level of knowledge of the contestant about the product she is promoting and the manner with which she carries herself while endorsing the product to the show visitors.

The show will also have several seminars to be conducted by experts in car repair and maintenance, auto detailing and cleaning, car restoration and motor sports. Likewise, an automotive art exhibit is in store for show visitors where they will find a collection of automotive memorabilia and photographic art on display. For those seeking hard to find parts, the show will have an autojumble and swap meet for new or used hard to find parts, accessories, automobilia and many more.

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1. Customers who purchase any Isuzu Crosswind variant, whether through outright cash payment or financing, from any authorized Isuzu dealership nationwide from March 1 to 31, 2004 are eligible to join the raffle.

2. With each purchase of an Isuzu Crosswind, the customer will be given one (1) raffle ticket for a chance to win the Grand Prize. The raffle ticket must be filled-out with COMPLETE NAME, ADDRESS, TEL. NUMBER, and affixed SIGNATURE and dropped in drop boxes located in the participating dealership where product was purchased.

3. Aside from the raffle ticket, the customer will also be given a free premium item from Isuzu, depending on the Crosswind variant purchased:
 i. Purchase of either Crosswind XL, XT, or XTRM, the customer will be given a Coleman Cooler
 ii. Purchase of either Crosswind XUV or XUVi, the customer will be given a Roof Basket

4. In the Grand Raffle draw, two winners will be drawn, one for the Metro Manila area and one for the provincial area.

5. Winners will be given a choice as to which prize they would like to avail of:

a. Grand Prize Option 1 – A brand-new Isuzu 4x2 D-MAX Manual Transmission

b. Grand Prize Option 2 – A 100% rebate on the actual retail cost of Crosswind purchased (rebate excludes cost of LTO Registration, car insurance, shipping fees, and chattel mortgage)

6. Deadline for submission of entries is on March 31, 2004.

7. Drawing of winners is on April 15, 2004 at Isuzu Commonwealth 5:00PM in the presence of Isuzu Philippines Corporation officials and a representative from the DTI. Drawing of winners will be telecast on Auto Extreme at 3:30PM in Channel 9, two weeks after the draw date.

8. A participant can win only once.

9. All prizes are TAX-PAID, no fees are required upon claiming of prizes.

10. Winners will be notified via telephone and registered mail. Winners will be announced in leading newspapers.

11. Winners may claim their prizes at the Customer Relations Department of Isuzu Philippines Corporation, Laguna Technopark, Sta. Rosa Laguna upon presentation of a valid ID, winning stub and registered mail.

12. Prizes not claimed within 60 days from receipt of notification will be forfeited in favor of Isuzu Philippines Corporation with the prior approval of the DTI.

13. Employees of Isuzu Philippines Corporation, authorized dealerships of Isuzu Philippines Corporation, and Great Wall Advertising Philippines, Inc. including their relatives up to the 3rd degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining.

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This time, Reyes is anti-people

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

TELL me it isn't true, Mr. Reyes.

Mr. Reyes here is Angelo Reyes, GMA's anti-kidnap czar.

I refer to news reports quoting Mr. Reyes as saying he has ordered the apprehension of motorists driving vehicles without plate numbers. The reports say Mr. Reyes' order will take effect on March 15, Monday. Those exempted from apprehension are with vanity plates like "Lawyer," "Mayor," or "Councilor" maybe.

I have a plate number that reads "Agmuryot." Will I not be apprehended?

* * *

I think Mr. Reyes is off-key here.

He says his order is designed to flush out kidnappers, car thieves and other criminals.

While the intention is good, it is not fair, though. It is not even logical. It is anti-people and therefore, maybe, unconstitutional even?

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* * *

The order gives us the impression that all motorists driving vehicles without plates are suspected kidnappers and car thieves.

That has always been the trouble with this country. All are suspects.

Look at our airports. Every passenger can't leave the airport without first surrendering the claim tag of his baggage. This practice gives the impression to every tourist that our country does not trust even its own citizens. In other countries, like America for example, you just walk out of the airport free as a bird after clearing customs and immigration. No need to surrender your bag tags before you exit.

* * *

But back to Mr. Angelo Reyes.

Mr. Reyes' directive passes the fault of government to the people. The inefficiency of government is reflected here in that the government's inability to act fast in processing plate numbers is hereby being ignored by Mr. Reyes. How sad.

Every vehicle buyer wants his/her plate number processed with dispatch. That's basic. Me for one, if I buy a new car, I want my new car to be with a plate number two, three days after I've purchased it. Why our LTOs can't do it remains as mysterious as planet Mars, if not the curse of the Bermuda Triangle.

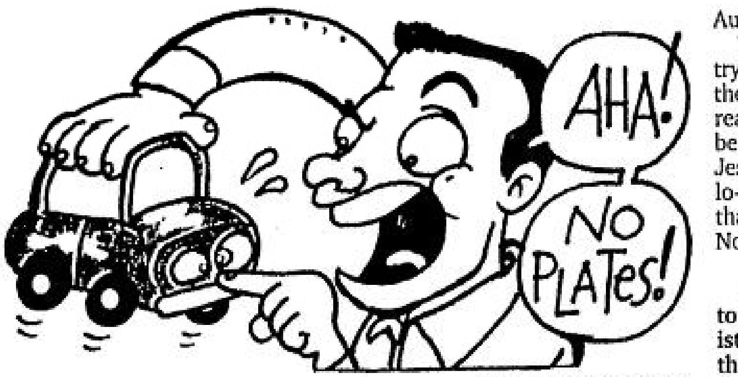
* * *

I have checked with car companies. Their reply: the LTOs make it hard for them to secure the plate numbers. They are as puzzled as motorists negotiating the Los Angeles Freeway for the first time.

The LTOs argue many car dealers deliver their receipts of purchase in bulk, making it hard for LTOs to process the papers in the shortest possible time.

Whatever, the fault always lies with the LTOs. For Mr. Reyes to punish motorists for the sin of government is the apex of madness.

> The LTOs argue many car dealers deliver their receipts of purchase in bulk, making it hard for LTOs to process the papers in the shortest possible time


AHA!
NO PLATES!
ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

* * *

It is bad enough that we have a traffic situation in the metropolis that remains unsolved all these years despite Bayani Fernando's loud pronouncements to the contrary.

The new order on plate numbers will only exacerbate matters. There's already too much mulcting on our roads by supposed enforcers of traffic laws. Mr. Reyes' directive will spawn more of that. Give us a break, please?

C'mon, Mr. Reyes, do it the other way around. Tell those LTO people to do their job instead of aiming your guns at us, the poor people. Or do you really want GMA to lose? Don't be naïve, sir. Your order will surely backfire on GMA as it is a surefire formula to gather an avalanche of votes for FPJ.

* * *

I missed the recent farewell party thrown by Dr. George S. K. Ty to Joji Miyake, the outgoing president of Toyota Autoparts Philippines Inc., at the Rizal Ballroom of the Makati Shangri-La Hotel.

Dr. Ty, who is the chair of the board of Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. and Toyota Autoparts Philippines, hosted the party to also express his "recognition of the significant contribution of the Toyota Group to the Philippine economy."

The party also welcomed Yasuro Takeuchi, who will be the incoming president of Toyota Autoparts Philippines, replacing Miyake-san.

Toyota Autoparts aims to become the country's No. 1 exporter of quality Toyota parts in the region in the next three years or so. Already, a sizable amount of investment has been poured into the project. Ariel "SPO2" de Jesus, who considers Robert Uy of Toyota Iloilo-Bacolod his dear friend, has confirmed that, saying: "We at Toyota always aim to be No. 1 in every endeavor that we take."

* * *

SPMJ GOLF. Too bad I will miss the golf tournament of my fellow motoring journalists today at Riviera. I have an engagement that I could not miss; it had been set as early as one year ago. But although I am not around, in spirit I am with you, buddies. To all those who threw a robust support behind the event that is being spearheaded no less by Ray Butch "Elvis" Gamboa and Vernon "Sean Lennon" Sarne, thank you very much. Next time around, the SPMJ Golf will be my top priority. In the meantime, will Toyota's Danny "Sir John" Isla win today's tournament? By way of a warning to the bold at heart, I'm betting on him.

* * *

WOMAN POWER. Do you know that Toyota-Cagayan de Oro is the only dealership nationwide, Toyota or otherwise, whose majority shares are controlled by a woman, Betty Lu? "I won the dealership for two reasons," said Betty Lu, chair and president of Toyota-Cagayan de Oro since the dealership began operations in 1996. "One, I told my interviewers from Japan's top Toyota officials, that with so many gentlemen surrounding me, how can I go wrong in running this dealership?" When pressed by the Japanese to comment on what will happen once she got married in case she beat her 14 rivals for the CDO dealership, Betty Lu answered: "Give me the dealership and I will remain single for the rest of my life."

She got the dealership.

* * *

QUOTE ME. It takes two to quarrel. So, stop complaining about the way the bus driver in front of you drives. Your quarrel might only lead to physical harm, if not instant death.

The mean machines of 'Torque'

NOT since Billy and Captain America cruised across the screen in "Easy Rider" has a film captured the thrill and exhilaration of cruising a motorcycle down the open road. In Warner Bros.' new action-thriller "Torque," man and machine are brought together in a high-octane, high-energy action film featuring some of the most state-of-the-art motorcycles on the road today.

Throughout most of his race to clear his name, lead character Ford (Martin Henderson) rides an Aprilia Mille RSV. An Italian bike known primarily as a racing machine, the Aprilia Mille RSV can reach speeds of over 180 mph, going from 0 to 100 in only 6.4 seconds. With a liquid-cooled 60-degree V-Twin engine, the Mille RSV is one of the more expensive and well-crafted "superbikes," costing the motorcycle enthusiast a hefty $25,000 or more.

Ford's love interest Shane (Monet Mazur) rides a cobalt blue Triumph Tr 600. The engine of the TT600 is a liquid-cooled DOHC 4-cylinder in-line with a capacity of 599cc. A multipoint sequential electronic fuel injection system with forced air induction helps the bike attain a maximum power of 110PS (108 bhp) at 12,750 rpm and a maximum torque of 68 Nm (5-0.5 ft.lbf) at 11,000 rpm.

Ford's sidekicks both ride Hondas: Dalton (Jay Hernandez) travels on an RC 51, which sports a 999cc liquid-cooled 90-degree V-twin engine, a six-speed transmission and a programmed fuel injection (PGM-F1). With two injectors per cylinder carburetion, the RC 51 brings superbike technology to the streets. Val (Will Yun Lee) rides a Honda CBR 954—almost as powerful as the RC 51, the CBR features a 954cc liquid-cooled four cylinder in-line engine and programmed fuel injection (PGM-FI) with automatic enricher circuit.

Triumphs

Triumphs are also featured in the film, most noticeably the Daytona 955i ridden by badass biker gang leader Trey (Ice-Cube). The 955i has a liquid-cooled, 3-cylinder DOHC in-line engine with a multipoint sequential electronic fuel injection system. Its maximum torque can reach 100Nm (74ft.lbf) at 8,200 rpm and its maximum power, 149PS (147bhp) at 10,700 rpm.

MARTIN Henderson riding an RC 51

During the final explosive chase in "Torque," the ultra fast, ultra expensive and extremely rare Y2K comes into play. Built by Marine Turbine Technologies in Louisiana, there are only 10 of these extraordinary bikes in existence in the world, four of which reside in the United States (one of them owned by motorcycle enthusiast Jay Leno). An eleventh Y2K is currently in the works.

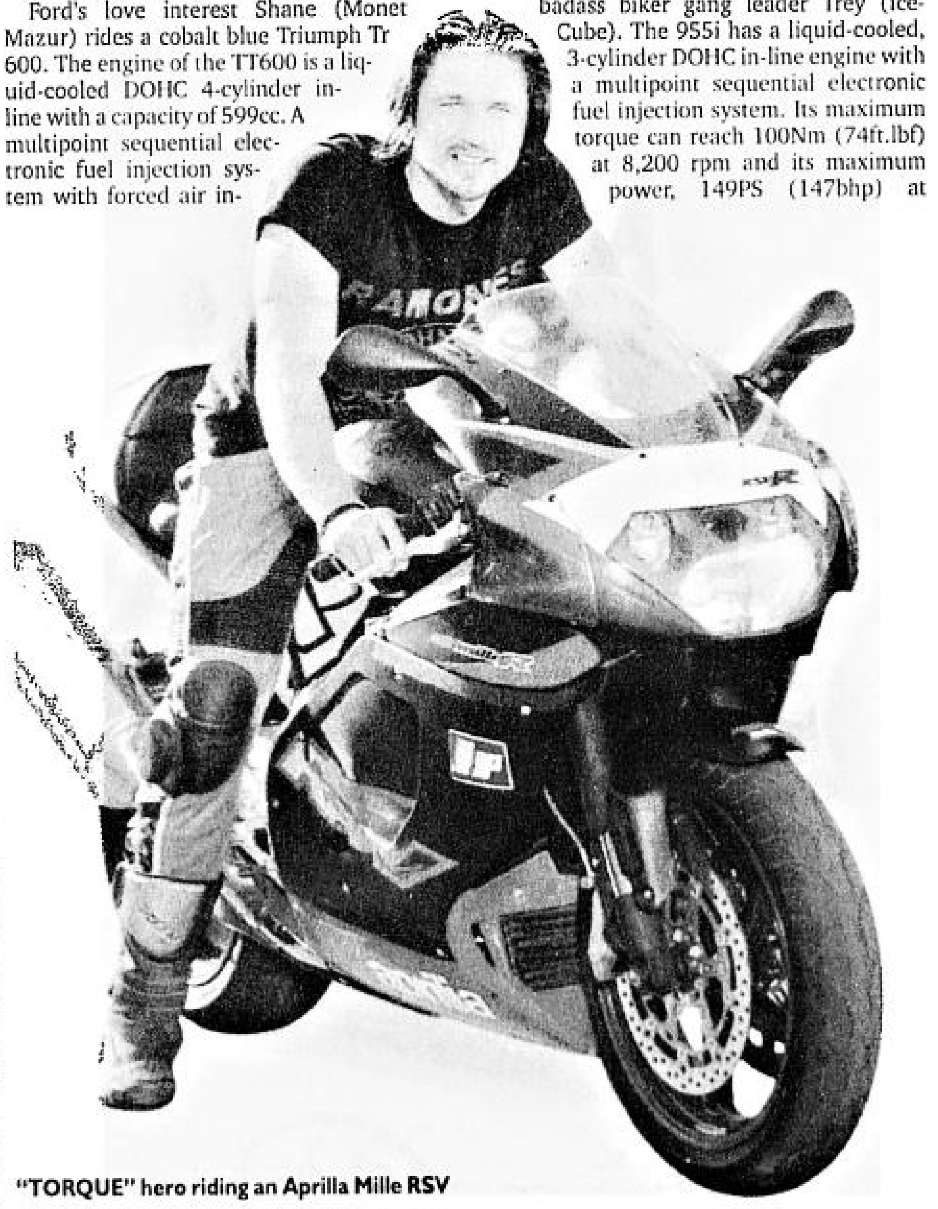
The production was fortunate enough to get permission to use the bike, often referred to as the world's fastest—and with good reason. The Y2K sports a carbon-filled chassis built around an inverted Rolls Royce Allison 250-C18 turbine jet-engine, originally designed to power a helicopter. With over 300 horsepower and 450 ft/lbs of torque, the Y2K goes from 0 to 227mph in a mere 15.0 seconds (The theoretical maximum speed of the jet cycle is over 250 mph).

70 bikes

Over 70 bikes were utilized by the production team. In addition to Triumphs, Hondas and Yamahas, Torque features four choppers built by well-known custom bike designer Jesse James, whose West Coast Choppers has been turning out streamlined, cutting-edge machines since 1989. With great care and craftsmanship, each bike takes 18 months to build and cost from $60,000 to $150,000. Jesse James has proudly crafted bikes for high profile clients including Shaquille O'Neal, Keanu Reeves and Kid Rock.

James not only provided bikes for the film, he also landed a role—those with a keen eye will be able to spot him in the film's bike rally scene as a customer whose timing is just a little off, when he interrupts Ford and Shane's reunion.

Whether you're a fan of cruisers or choppers, superbikes or custom built machines, "Torque" showcases the best and most powerful of them all. The first major motorcycle movie since 1969, when "Easy Rider" captured the imagination of its generation, "Torque" might just be the "extreme rider" of our time - an action movie that real motorcyclists can enjoy.


"TORQUE" hero riding an Aprilla Mille RSV

East West Bank embarks on aggressive car financing

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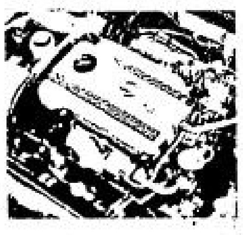

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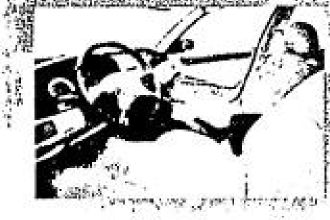

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From 'glum-glum' to 'zoom-zoom'

By Tessa R. Salazar

And what does 'zoom zoom' mean, anyway? 'Zoom zoom' is the sum total of what Mazda represents as a brand. It is what differentiates Mazda and connects with its love for motion

ONE of the biggest automotive mysteries is the big discrepancy between the Mazda image here in the Philippines and in the rest of the world.

This is how the rest of the world sees Mazda: a maker of slick sports machines. For instance, the Mazda3 sports compact (known as Axela in Japan) has been named Canadian Car of the Year for 2004 by the Automobile Journalists Association of Canada (Ajac), which boasts membership in over 50 major publications across Canada.

Int'l automotive awards

For the past 21 months, in fact, Mazda's line of new-generation "Zoom-Zoom" lines—the Mazda6, Mazda2, RX-8 and Mazda3—have captured more than 135 international automotive awards.

Mazda topped four of the 10 2004 Canadian Car of the Year category awards: Mazda3 as Best New Economy Car; Mazda3 Sport as Best New Sports Coupé (below Can$35,000); Mazda6 as the Best New Family Vehicle; and Mazda RX-8 as the Best New Sports/Performance Vehicle.

The signature "zoom-zoom" teaser can be found in many other countries, in international TV shows and auto magazines.

'Zoom-zoom' magic

The big question now is: where is that "zoom-zoom" magic in this part of the world?

Mazda people aren't about to reveal the answer to that question. Neither will they dwell on the Ford-Francisco Motors Corp. row (Ford now owns more than 33 percent of the global Mazda brand).

Mazda Philippines, like the "zoom-zoom" teaser, wants to look forward, and fast. The challenge now, it says, is to transport the automobile maker's performance-oriented international image to the Philippines.

It believes that with the launch of the SUV Tribute and the sedan Mazda6, greater accessibilities have been created for Filipinos in terms of car options. More options, it reveals, started on Feb. 28 when full commercial operations started.

Mazda6, the car purposely brought in to lead the pack of "zoom-zoom" brands in this country, has received 70 awards around the world, including the 2004 Car of the Year in China, 2003 RJC Car of the Year in Japan, Britain's Auto1Award Car of the Year in the UK and a member of Car and Driver's 2003 Best in the United States.

How it fares in the Philippines, however, is still to be ascertained. Nevertheless, engineers boast of a car with a braking system replete with advanced software such as Traction Control System and ABS (antilock brake system). Driver evaluation clinics have concluded Mazda6 delivers under the widest variety of real-world braking situations.

TRIBUTE

Bigger than a Ford Lynx, Mazda6 presents itself with a strong bold design. The car has been equipped with a high-mount double wishbone configuration at the front to lessen negative road inputs and assures maximum handling stability. Specs point to an E-type multilink layout featuring low-profile springs and angled dampers at the rear to minimize intrusion into the vehicle interior. It also boasts of linear and predictable handling.

"Image-wise, therefore, we think we are still at an advantage because we have the opportunity now to tell the public what Mazda really is all about," said Dave Macasadia, managing director of Mazda Philippines. Dave-Mac was formerly Ford's vice president for sales and marketing.

The Tribute, on the other hand, has what is called the "zoom-zoom spirit of enjoyable drive dynamics." That means the Tribute has a 3.0-liter engine with the length, width and breadth of an SUV but the performance and handling of a sports car.

The Tribute for both the Philippine and foreign markets is assembled at the Ford plant. The Mazda6 is a CBU model from Japan.

Value

Rather than looking at prices, Mazda thinks the value makes the two vehicles stand out. Mazda6 2.0-liter is priced at P1.105 million, and the Mazda Tribute 3.0L V6 retails at P1.098 million.

"We believe both models pack performance and enjoyment at really great value," said Macasadia.

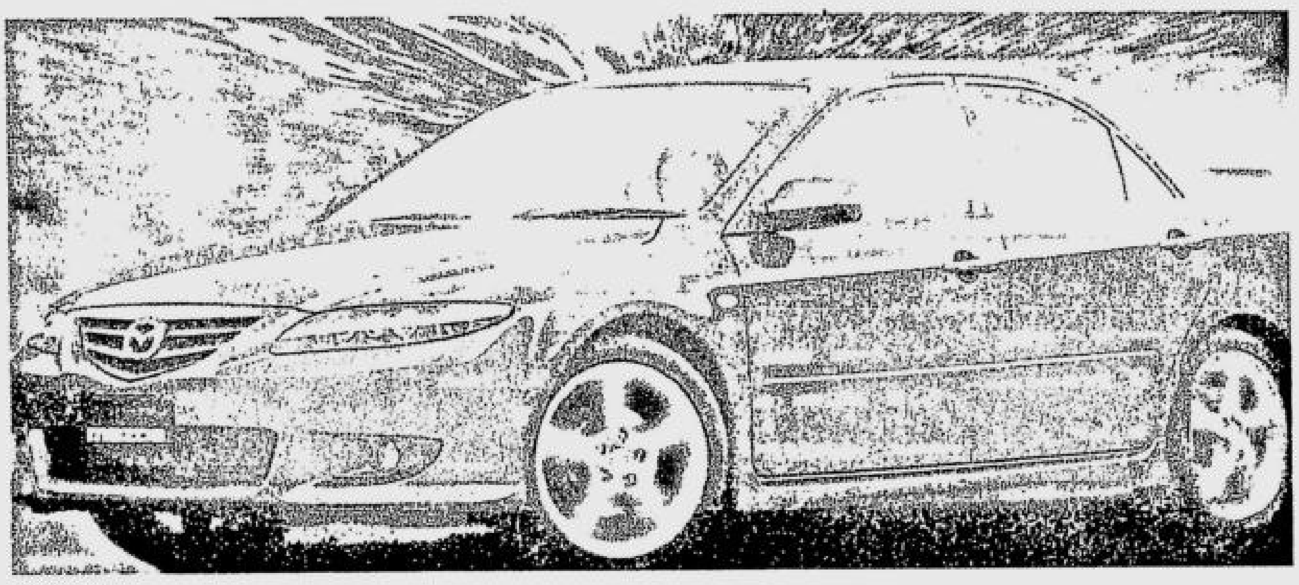
When asked if Mazda can get out of the shadow of Ford, Maria Antoinette Lee of Mazda's brand and marketing communications said Mazda has no shadow to get out of in the first place.

"It has its own identity as a product and its own unique set of drive characteristics as well as brand dynamics. It stands on its own. With a whole different set of offerings from Ford, there is no need to consciously create efforts to get out of a perceived shadow," she said. Lee also stressed Ford is neither a big brother nor father to Mazda.

"Some models share the same manufacturing facility, however, they are two brands with their own set of characteristics. It's like a BMW and a Mercedes-Benz. They are separate brands in the market."

Mazda also dissipates talk that its spare parts are hard to come by. "We will have parts for all Mazda vehicles purchased from Philippine Mazda dealers. On the sticky issue of the grey market or the secondhand imports, we would be glad to render service to the owners of these vehicles. However, it may be possible to have a bit of a down time on the vehicle because they may have parts requirements that are not in our inventory. We will exert all efforts to ensure that parts availability is not a problem," Lee explains.

And what does "zoom zoom" mean, anyway? "Zoom zoom," Macasadia says, is the sum total of what Mazda represents as a brand. It is what differentiates Mazda and connects with its love for motion.



MAZDA6

Giving new life to an old brand

By Charles E. Buban

MAZDA has built a remarkable reputation everywhere it goes.

As the company that gave us the much loved MX-5 Miata sports car and a host of other family and business vehicles (323 sedans, E series vans and B series pickups), the name has indeed become a symbol of quality and pride.

Mazda was founded in 1920 by Jujiro Matsuda who got the name from the supreme god of the Zoroastrian religion, Ahura Mazda.

Today, Mazda is part of Ford Motors' ever-growing family. It first forged a partnership with the US auto giant in 1969, forming an automatic transmission manufacturing joint venture.

Ten years later, Ford acquired a 25 percent stake in Mazda, and the relationship has developed strongly ever since.

Ford reintroduces Mazda

This is one reason the brand is reintroduced here by Ford Philippines.

But Ford Group Philippines president Henry Co, during last month's Mazda corporate launch, was quick to clarify that the brand will be handled by a separate team, Mazda Philippines, that will be working independently from other Ford brand teams.

Mazda steps on to the Philippine market, bringing no less than its high-end sedan Mazda6 and sport utility vehicle Tribute plus two still to be announced models.

It should be noted that Ford Philippines currently exports other Mazda models—the Protégé sedans and Mazda Tribute SUVs—to Thailand and Indonesia.

"It is only fitting that Ford Philippines should also provide these outstanding vehicles in the local market," Co hinted of the Protégé.

For this year alone, Co said, Mazda hopes to be able to sell at least 2,000 units.

Entered in the early '80s

Mazda came to our shores in the early '80s with Francisco Motors assembling Mazda pickups until two years ago.

In 1995, Ford and Mazda invested an initial $500 million to establish a plant in Thailand and three years later began exporting its one-ton pickup, the Ford Ranger and Mazda Fighter.

Then last year, Ford Group invested roughly about $25 million for the Mazda brand out of the earlier $50 million that Ford announced it is investing in the Philippines, Co explained.

This increased export capacity of its Santa Rosa manufacturing facility would clearly position the Philippines as an important export hub for Ford within Asean that would be second only to its Thailand operation.

Ford Philippines already holds the distinction of being the country's sole exporter of completely built-up (CBU) vehicles to its neighboring Asean countries.

Toyota tops charts in February

TOYOTA Motor Philippines Corp. (TMP) once again emerged as the No. 1 automotive company in February by grabbing an enormous chunk of the market with almost 34 percent.

Toyota's continuous market leadership can largely be attributed to the strong sales of its passenger car lineup

Based on the figures reported by the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. (Campi) for February, Toyota took hold of the top spot by selling a total of 2,307 units. With year-to-date sales of 4,755 units, it marked a growth of 8 percent compared to the same period last year. Toyota also registered the highest sales output in the passenger car and commercial vehicle category last month.

Remarkable performance

February proved to be a difficult month for the whole automotive industry as market uncertainty increases under the prevailing economic conditions. However, Toyota's aggressive marketing strategies contributed to its overall remarkable performance, leaving its competitors behind with Honda landing in second place by taking only 18 percent with total sales of 1,214 units. Mitsubishi took third spot with 1,058 units or almost 16 percent of the February market.

Toyota's continuous market leadership can largely be attributed to the strong sales of its passenger car lineup with 1,283 units sold, an 80 percent growth in market share compared to the same period last year. This translates to an outstanding 47 percent, seizing almost half of the whole passenger car market.

February PC sales

Toyota's enormous February PC sales increases its year-to-date figures to 2,486 units, making it 60 percent higher compared to February last year. Honda and Mitsubishi followed with total passenger car sales of 771 units and 234 units, respectively.

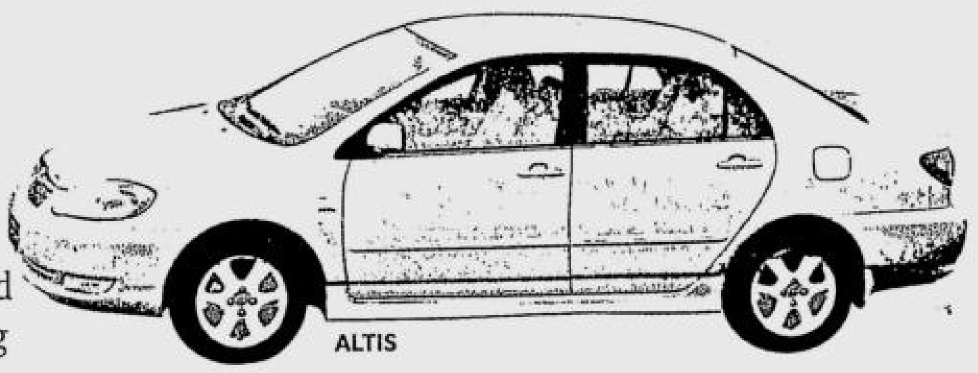
The Vios remained the best in its class with 585 units or 25 percent, beating Honda City's 471 sales. The introduction of the 2004 Corolla Altis also spurred sales of the mainstream sedan with a little less than 17 percent or 388 units compared to a mere 133 units of the Civic.

Commercial vehicle leader

Toyota also sustained its leadership in the commercial vehicle category with sales of 1,024 units or 25 percent share, maintaining a strong start with year-to-date sales of 2,269 units. Mitsubishi takes the second spot with 824 units while Isuzu followed with totals sales of 670 units.

Toyota's commercial vehicle dominance can largely be attributed to the sales of the Revo, unbeatable in its top spot with 614 units or 39 percent. The introduction of new improved features of the Revo VX200 and Sport Runner last month, combined with extensive financing promos left the Mitsubishi Adventure and Isuzu Crosswind behind.

Toyota is set to continue its dominance in March by offering financing and service promos for all the Revo variants. The special financing packages will run until March 15 and are made available through the Toyota Financial Services. For more details, visit your nearest Toyota dealer today.



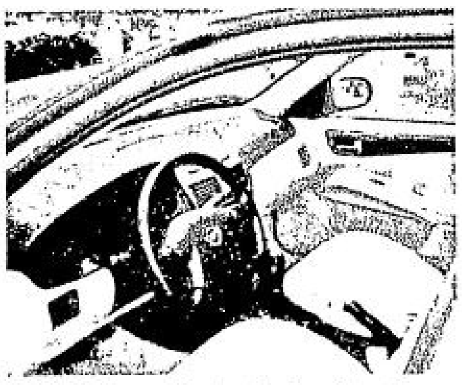
ALTIS

RAV4

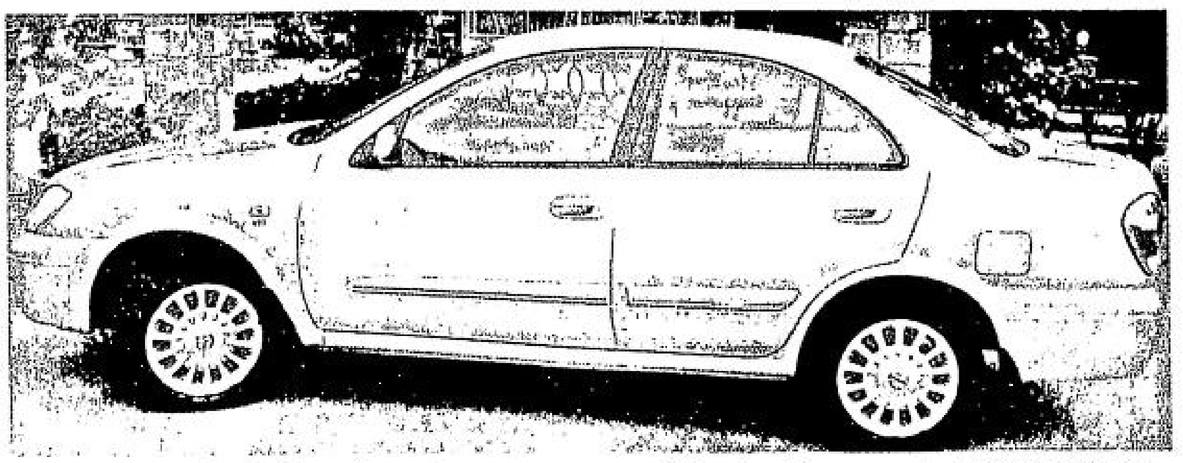
The transformation of the Nissan Sentra

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza



INSIDE the new Sentra: Carbon fiber trim, stark black and beige color contrast



2004 Nissan Sentra 180 GT; Less frills, more power

PHOTOS BY AIDA SEVILLA MENDOZA

FROM EXALTA GS Grandeur and GS Superio to 180 GT, GS and GSX—the changes in nomenclature reflect the transformation of the Nissan Sentra with the recent intro of the 2004 model. Which is to say that the Sentra has been restyled in a minimalist manner while a new, more powerful engine has been installed in the top-of-the-line 180 GT.

At first glance, the latest Sentra does not appear so different from its predecessor except for the usual revisions front and rear via bigger head and tail lamps, a new front grille with horizontal lines and wider rear fenders. After all, the '04 Sentra is built on the same platform and has the same suspension system (independent MacPherson struts and coil springs with transverse link and stabilizer bar in front, multilink beam suspension at the rear) as the outgoing model. The 14 mm increase in trunk lid height for more cargo space and the 40 mm increase in rear length to accommodate the bigger tail lights and taller bumper are hardly noticeable.

Trendier trim

It is under the hood and inside the passenger cabin that the real transformation took place. Although the 180 GT has a 2-DIN audio system with a 6-disc CD changer and six speakers, gone are the Grandeur's heads-up digital speedometer display, the mobile pop-up VCD at the center of the dashboard, the Euro-inspired steering wheel switch with which you can adjust the radio tuner and audio volume. Gone are the retractable sunshades for the rear windows and the digital rear distance warning system in the rear view mirror although the rear back-up sonar has been retained in the 180 GT. The warm but faux woodgrain accents on the door panels, steering wheel, gear shift knob, center console and parking brake are gone, too, having been replaced with cold but trendier carbon fiber trim and finish.

The upholstery is still leather (in the 180 GT only) and the overhead map lamps and sunglass holder are still up there. But the two-tone color contrast of the interior is starker, with dramatic black and beige replacing the gray and beige of old. To create a stronger image, the previously woodgrain-accented gear shift knob has been replaced with a black leather, carbon fiber-finished gun-grip type.

Classy minimalist

Although Nissan Motor Philippines Inc. (NMPI) may have transformed the Sentra in terms of downscaling its passenger cabin features from fabulously luxurious to classy minimalist, it countervailed these changes with the 1.8-liter, 4 cylinder-in-line, twin-cam, 16-valve powerplant with VTC (Valve Timing Control) of the 180 GT. This engine, mated to a 4-speed electronic automatic transmission with overdrive, supplies peak 130 ps/6,000 rpm horsepower and 16.7 kg-m/4,400 rpm max torque, definitely an improvement oyer the 116 ps/6,000 rpm HP and 14.9 kg-m /4,000 rpm torque of the 1.6-liter Sentra.

Driving the Sentra 180 GT on a traffic-free straightaway, I discovered that its engine was not exactly capable of neck-snapping acceleration, but it packed smooth and adequate power, nonetheless, for a passenger car of this size and price, cruising along nicely at 150 km/h. The Sentra, after all, has never pretended to be a high-performance sports sedan although the feedback from racing pros was that that the 180 GT handled impressively at the Subic race track last month.

Current

While the Sentra's iteration in the 1990s is credited as being the first locally assembled compact car in the Philippines to have an air bag as standard equipment, it has been overtaken on this score by the Toyota Corolla Altis and Honda Civic, both of which are equipped with dual air bags up front while the new Sentra still has only one. However, the Sentra is current on other safety features, such as ventilated disc brakes on all four wheels, ABS with EBD (electronic brake force distribution) and BA (braking assist), pretensioner seatbelts and fog lamps in front. Because of these safety features, the 30 percent increase in the rigidity of its platform and its dual-zone impact-absorbing body, the Sentra 180 GT earned a 5-star safety rating from the Japanese New Car Assessment Program (JNCAP).

Summing up, the new Sentra, in spite of or because of its transformation, is a practical, sensible, well-balanced, comfortable family-oriented car that is easy to drive. This time, NMPI has launched a Sentra with less frills and more power while maintaining a competitive price level: P888,000 for the 180 GT compared to the Altis 1.8G's P899,000 and the Civic 2.0 liter's P900,000.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Some people are wise, and some are otherwise.

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

Alay-Lakad plates exempted from color-coding

THE ALAY-LAKAD Foundation Inc. (Alfi) announced that its commemorative motor vehicle plates, issued in time for its 31st founding anniversary, exempts cars from the Metro Manila Development Authority's coding system by virtue of an official directive from Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina Jr.

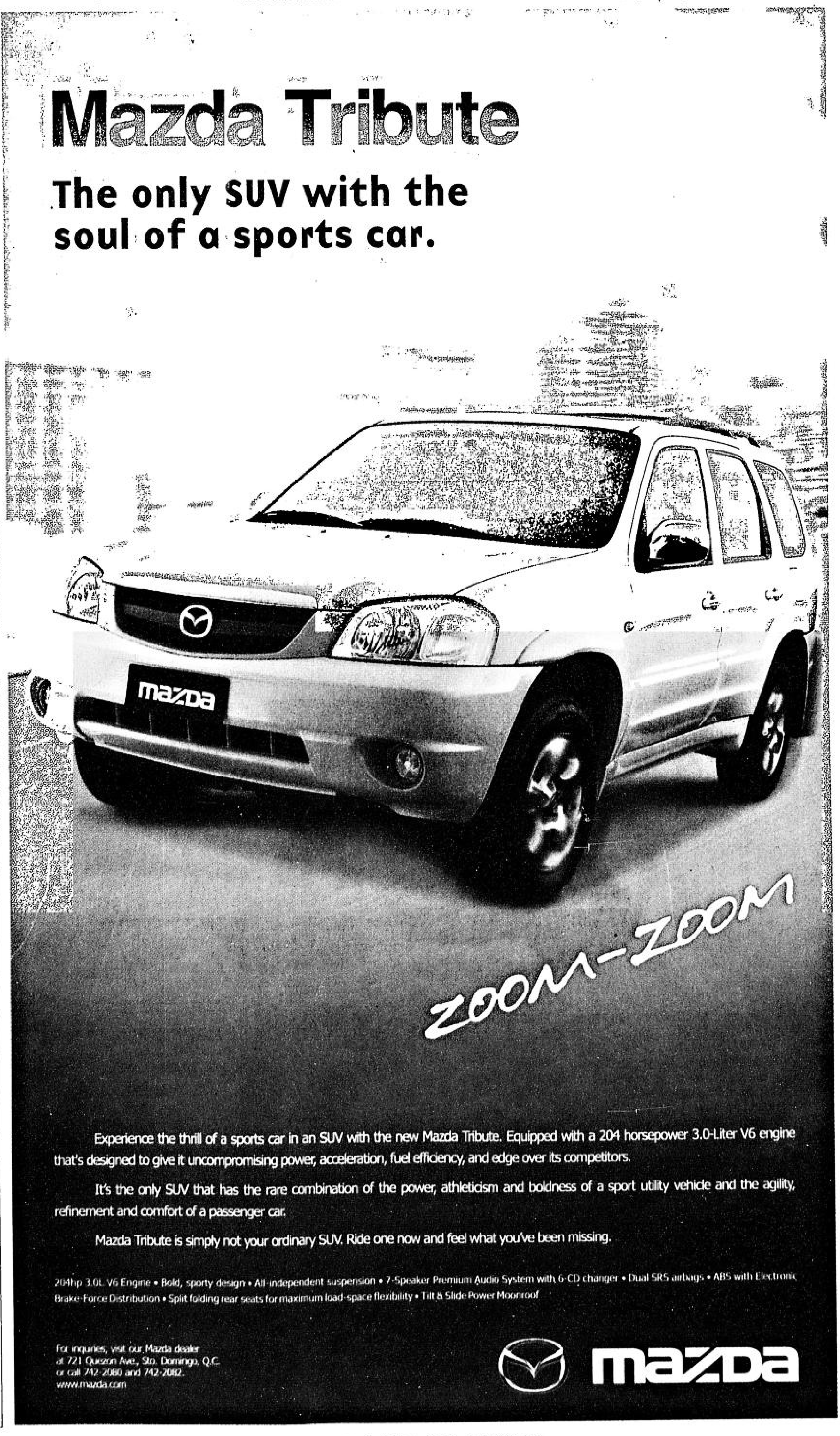
The commemorative plates, which are valid up to Nov. 16, 2004, were approved and authorized recently by the Department of Transportation and Communication mainly through the efforts and recommendation of Lina, who is one of Alfi's trustees.

Extending courtesy

The DILG secretary has officially written to Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes E. Ebdane Jr. to direct police officers assigned to the streets to extend courtesy to motorists whose cars bear the Alay-Lakad plates.

As part of Alfi's fund-raising campaign for its socio-economic projects for out-of-school youngsters, the commemorative plates will be made available to all individual and institutional members of the Foundation as well as to the public. Alfi president Frank Evaristo said that so far, the Foundation has funded 600 projects with more than 50,000 out-of-school youth beneficiaries nationwide.

Only 500 commemorative plates are available. Interested motorists may call up the Alay-Lakad Foundation secretariat at 523-1359 or 522-6134. The Alfi executive director is Raffy Cosuco.



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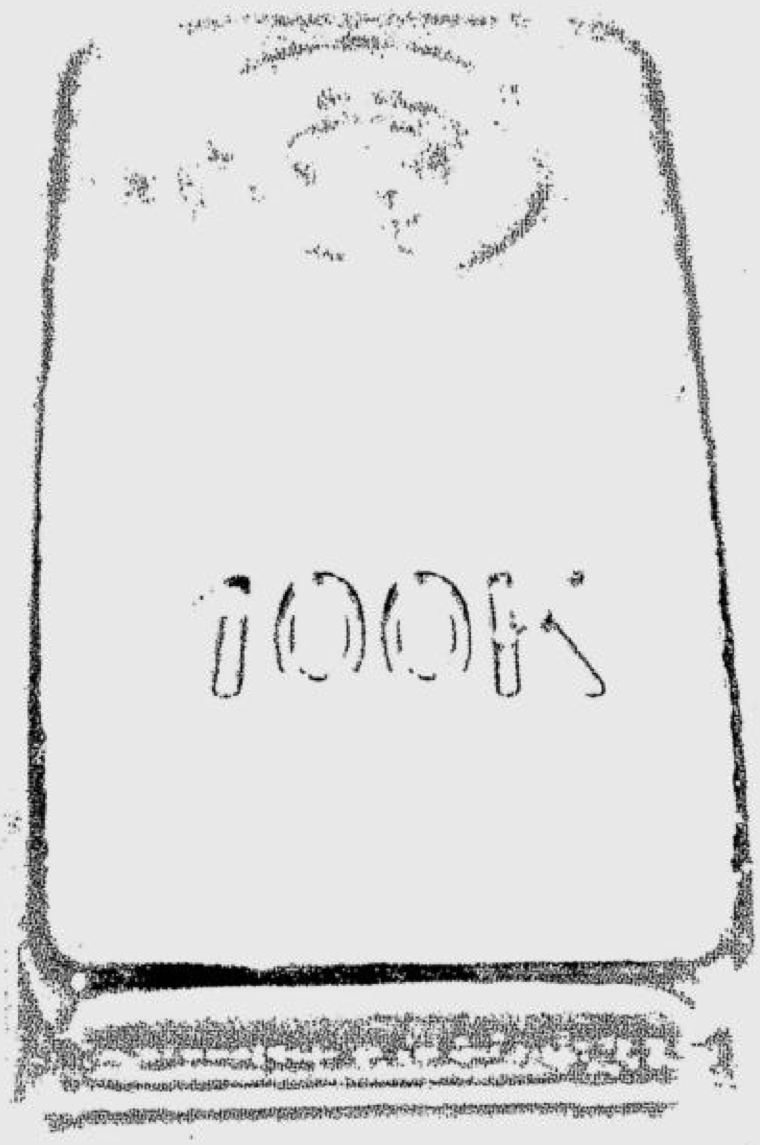
Passion



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SR A/T	891,000	100,000	68,410	47,119	37,437	26,839	21,899	18,780	
GSX A/T	842,000	100,000	63,978	44,066	35,014	25,102	20,481	17,564	
GLX A/T	802,000	100,000	60,360	41,574	33,036	23,684	19,324	16,570	
GL GAS	693,000	100,000	50,501	34,784	27,645	19,819	16,171	13,864	
DLX GAS (15.20%dp)	658,000	100,000	47,335	32,603	25,914	18,578	15,159	12,995	
DLX GAS (50%dp)	658,000	329,000	27,417	18,278	14,561	10,430	8,503	7,230	
RAV4 4x2 (10.02%dp)	998,000	100,000	78,088	53,785	42,729	30,633	24,994	21,298	
RAV4 4x2 (50%dp)	998,000	499,000	41,955	28,884	22,952	16,440	13,403	11,405	10,697

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How to make Bacalao a la Vizcaina /D4

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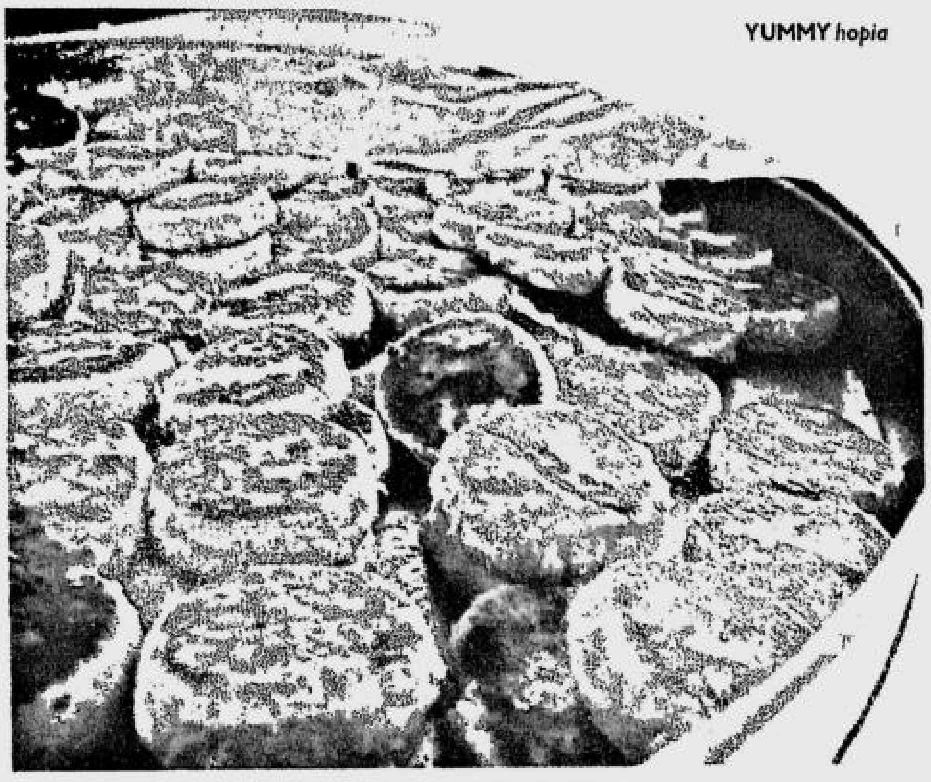
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

MONDAY **ARTS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD** ● FRIDAY **HOME & FASHION** ● SUNDAY **SURPRISES**



YUMMY *hopia*

Hoping to make authentic 'hopia'

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

DO you have a good recipe for *hopia*? I am asking for a friend in the United States who would like to make *hopia* that tastes (almost the same as what) leading Chinese factories like Eng Bee Tin, Holland and Polland make. She particularly wants to learn how to make different fillings starting with *mongo*.

MYRNA

Of all things, why *hopia*? It is widely available all over the States and Europe. You can get Holland and Polland in Chinatown and, when all else fails, the Pinoy stores!

Well, I asked one of my favorite students, Fe Ong, owner of Emerald Chinese Restaurant on Roxas Boulevard, where Chinese cuisine is at its finest, to rescue Kitchen Rescue. This is her recipe.

Hopia

Dough A:

¾ c all-purpose flour
1 tbsp sugar
4 tbsp lard
1/3 c water

Mix all the ingredients. To make smooth dough, let it rest for at least 30 minutes then cut into desired number of pieces.

Oil Dough B:

¼ c all-purpose flour
¼ cake flour
6 tbsp lard

Mix all the ingredients. Set aside. Cut into desired number of pieces.

Mongo filling:

½ kg green *mongo*, boil and mash
1 c sweet potato, boil and mash
2 c sugar
2 tbsp oil

In a saucepan, put all ingredients together. Cook until thick. Let it cool then chill and form into small balls.

Assembly:

Put Dough B in A then wrap and roll. Make three folds and roll again, repeat at least three times then flatten. (The process is similar to making puff pastry.) The more you repeat the process of rolling and folding, the flakier the dough.

Put in the filling and pinch edges to seal then brush with egg yolk or milk and sprinkle sesame seeds on top. Bake for 20-30 minutes or until golden brown in a *hopia* oven or cook over a dry hot skillet.

I wonder if you can give me a recipe for mushroom soup. I once tasted mushroom soup with mushrooms that were really big. I have lived in Canada since 1967, and I have seen large mushrooms called shiitake. We are retired people and our tastes are very simple.

Would you be able to give me a recipe I can show to my wife and see if she can prepare it?

GREG ASPIRAS

Here's the recipe you requested and thank you for being a part of my Kitchen Rescue family! For this recipe, the more varieties of mushrooms you put, the better.

Mushroom soup

3 tbsp butter
1 large onion, chopped
¼ c dried shiitake mushrooms, soaked in water, sliced
4 c fresh mixed mushrooms of choice, or use only 1 type if you wish, sliced
5 large garlic cloves, chopped
3 tbsp brandy
3 tbsp all-purpose flour
5 c stock
¼ tsp ground nutmeg (optional)
1 tbsp chopped parsley
½ c whipping cream (If you want a thicker mushroom soup, reduce stock to 3½ c and put 1½ c of cream)

Melt butter in a heavy saucepan. Add onion, button mushroom stems and garlic. Sauté until onion is translucent.

Add brandy and reduce until most of the liquid is gone. Add flour and gradually stir in broth. Add nutmeg.

Cover. Simmer until soup is slightly thickened, about 25 minutes. Add cream and simmer until heated through, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Where can I buy glass noodles for *chap-chae*? Sotanghon seems a poor substitute. Also, is there a difference between rice wine vinegar and rice vinegar?

SIENNA

I understand how poor a substitute *sotanghon* is, especially when making *chap-chae*. The recipe is called *chap-chae* because it uses Chap-chae Noodles! Chap-chae or Korean Cellophane Noodles are made from mung bean, thus the gumminess. *Sotanghon* is made of soy beans.

Chap-chae is available in Rustan's, in the section for imported Asian products. The noodles are moss green in color and come in a yellow bag. Or you can go to a Korean store—there are several all over town. I get mine in Ortigas. Call 6386465.

As to your second question, a lot of people are confused between the two. Some even claim they are one and the same. Basically rice vinegar is made from fermented rice or from rice wine. If it is made from fermented rice, then it is rice vinegar. If the mixture evolved from the further fermentation of rice wine to make it vinegar, then it is rice wine vinegar.

Where I can get crystallized ginger? I was hoping to make some gingersnap cookies or some other rich, spicy cookie.

BELINDA

Crystallized ginger is easy to get abroad but not here. But they're rather easy to make, though a bit of patience is required.

Crystallized ginger

1 c young, tender ginger (as fresh and young as possible)

Cut into 2-inch lengths and slice lengthwise into 1/8-inch pieces. Pierce ginger repeatedly with a fork so that it absorbs the sugar.

Toss the slices into a bowl with 1½ c granulated sugar.

In a heavy saucepan, add a tablespoon of water, add ginger and sugar. Stir occasionally for an hour over low heat until the syrup starts to thicken and crystallize. Take note: when it crystallizes (not caramelizes) and has hardly any syrup left, remove it from the heat and toss while it cools. (If done well, the ginger should separate at this point). Lay out on a tray to cool and dry. Store in airtight containers and use as desired.

Classes at my cooking school:

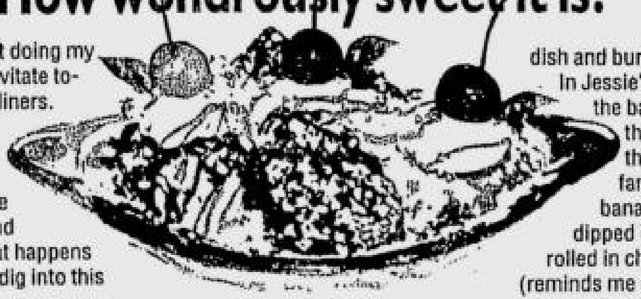
March 12—Gourmet Pancit (The art of making delicious pancit): Pancit Canton with Scallops, Pancit Bihon Guisado with Chinese Asado and Roasted Duck, Pancit Mami in Lechon Manok Broth, Lang-lang with Fresh Spring Vegetables, Gourmet-Style Pancit Habhab

March 13—Japanese 101 (part 2): Sushi Cake, Sprout and Kani Salad with Sesame Seed Dressing, The Perfect Tempura (Mixed), Kamameshi Rice, Mixed Yakiniku with Dipping Sauces (Japanese-style barbecue)

For questions and comments, text 0917-8399888.

EDITOR'S *rave* BOARD

How wondrously sweet it is!



FOR some reason that is not doing my pitiful figure any good, I gravitate toward people who are lusty diners. Believe me, I have friends who get goosebumps just by looking at a fabulous serving of Banana Split at Le Soufflé Bistro in Ortigas. And don't get me started on what happens to them when they actually dig into this classic dessert.

The friend who introduced me to Jessie Sincioco's delicious Mongo Soup and tender Lamb Chops with Rosemary—a magnificent combination especially on a day when you're famished for real food—also got me acquainted with her Banana Split.

Acquainted? That's too weak a word. Addicted is more like it. How else explain the myriad excuses we make up so we can meet at Le Soufflé? We order Banana Split every single time we are there and, boy, we are there a lot. We get separation anxiety if we stay away too long. One of us breaks into a nasty rash, another one gets hot flashes and I start writing a rave review about a dessert that never quite gets the respect that it deserves just because its main ingredient is the lowly banana.

At first glance you'll think there's nothing spectacular about Le Soufflé's Banana Split because it comes in a boat dish, just like it does in the next restaurant and the next and the next. But look closely. In other restaurants, the banana is cut in half, plonked into the dish and buried in cheap ice cream.

In Jessie's version of this classic, the banana is cut crosswise, then each half is split into three and arranged like a fan. You don't get a bare banana. Each section is dipped in dark chocolate then rolled in chopped pistachio nuts (reminds me of Almond Roca) before it finds its sacred place amongst the mounds of ice cream.

Always, the bananas are nestled under scoops of pistachio, strawberry and chocolate ice cream. All three flavors are made right in the Soufflé kitchen. The ensemble is topped with cream Chantilly then drizzled in perfect proportions with chocolate and caramel sauces. Did I hear you say "triple bypass"? Well, then, pray for us.

Finishing touches include a sprinkling of more chopped pistachios, whole cherries and sprigs of mint. The Banana Split of my dreams is available only at Le Soufflé Bistro on Ruby Road in Ortigas (tel. 6361613). *CBF*

Baker to the stars /D2

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MARCH 11 THURSDAY [illegible]

WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

DIANA ZUBIRI

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'Ensaymada' queen is now baker to stars

Cheloy Ignacio has teamed up with a Malaysian company for the Asian distribution of her baked goods

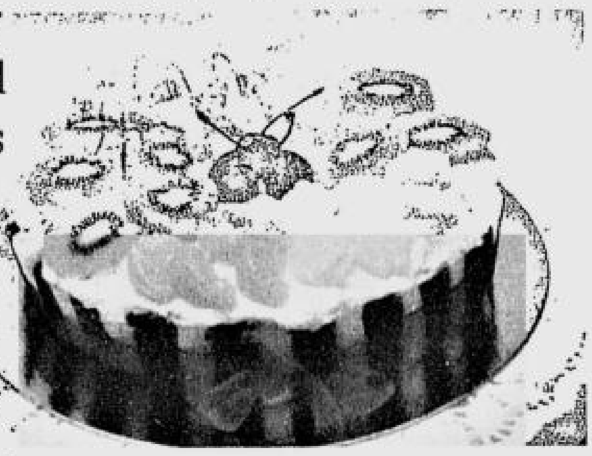
By Remy Umerez
Contributor

CHERIE Lou "Cheloy" Ignacio, the former stepmother of child star Niño Muhlach, has successfully run a bakeshop for 12 years and has become an authority on *ensaymada*. The woman behind Quickmelt is not offended when people refer to her as *ensaymada* queen.

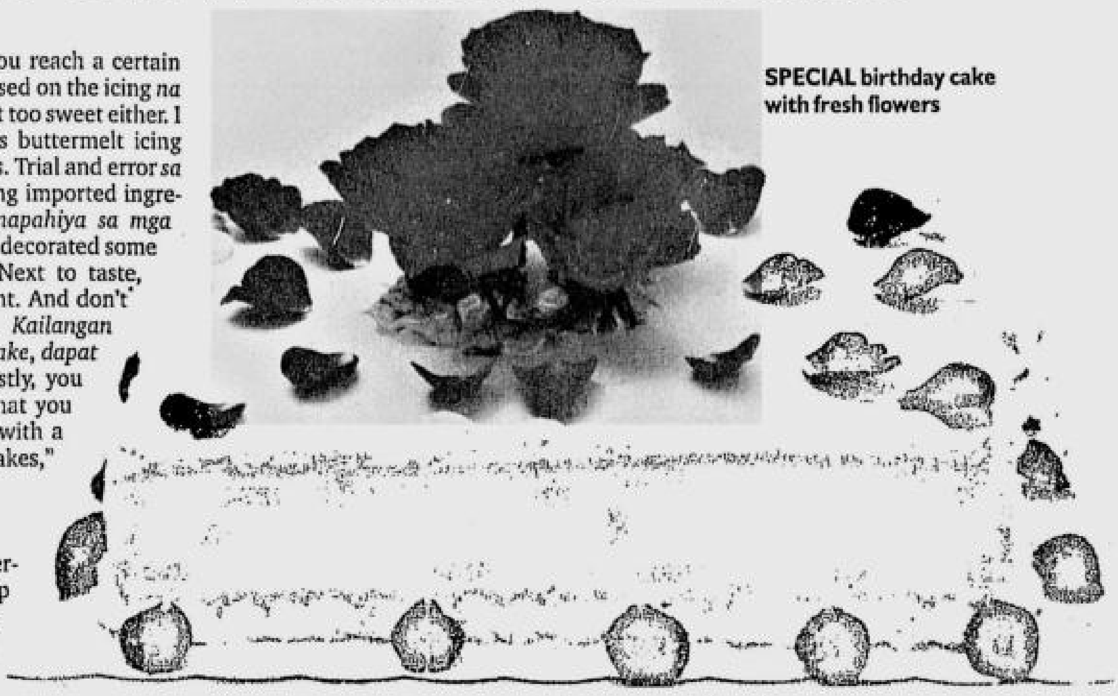
This year, Ignacio wants to be known for more than just the *ensaymada* by adding new items to her list of baked goodies. As part of her expansion program, she is launching Celebrity Cakes.

Before embarking on her new venture, Ignacio prepared by taking up baking lessons to update her knowledge.

"You learn the basics in school and then it is up to you to go on experimenting. You add (or reduce) something until you reach a certain degree of perfection. I focused on the icing *na hindi dapat matigas* and not too sweet either. I developed a very delicious buttermelt icing and studied for two months. Trial and error *sa simula*. I don't mind wasting imported ingredients because *ayokong mapahiya sa mga kaibigan kong* celebrities. I decorated some cakes with real flowers. Next to taste, packaging is very important. And don't deceive your customers. *Kailangan kung gaano kaganda ang cake, dapat ganon din ito kasarap*. Lastly, you have to enjoy and love what you are doing. I am a person with a sweet tooth and I adore cakes," she explains.



FRUIT Torte



SPECIAL birthday cake with fresh flowers

Tropical flavors

Under her personal supervision, Ignacio's bakeshop produced cakes with flavors like mango, *ube*, *macapuno*, *pandan*. She also baked sugar-free items for diabetics.

Most of the cakes were sent to Ignacio's celebrity friends like Zsa Zsa Padilla, Rosanna Roces and her manager Lolit Solis, Anabelle Rama, Marjorie Barretto, Willie Revillame, Boy Abunda and Kris Aquino. The new products were very well received.

Judging from the orders she has been getting, potential bestsellers are Strawberry Shortcake, Ube Macapuno with Halaya Buttermelt Icing, Pandan Macapuno with Buttermelt Icing, Mango Cake with Buttermelt Icing, Moist Chocolate Cake with Chocolate Fudge Icing, Decadence Chocolate Cake with caramel syrup and Classic Sansrival.

For health-conscious people, Ignacio recommends Carrot Cake, Banana Carrot Cake, Pineapple Banana, Caramel Apple Pie, Apple Walnut, Pineapple Upside-down, and Zucchini and Pennetone Cake. The cakes contain whole ground flaxseed meal, which is rich in fiber and omega 3, among others. Splenda or fructose is used instead of sugar.

Recently, Ignacio inked a deal with Silverbird, a public company in Malaysia under the conglomerate General & Global Holdings owned by Dato Anwar Othman. The Malaysian company, a major supplier of food products in Asia and Europe, will take care of distributing the cakes and pastries in the region.

She will fly to Malaysia in April to present her Quickmelt products and demonstrate how they are done.

Ignacio's next goal is to build a dream store where her creations and cakes from around the world will be showcased.

Quickmelt Ensaymada is found in all SM branches but Celebrity Cakes are available only on order. Call 6871121, 0917-6224516 or 0916-2025574.

Fruity desserts to beat the summer heat

By Dorothy MJ Ferreria
Contributor

A NO-BAKE dessert loaded with fruits is a perfect meal-ender in these days when temperatures are starting to climb. Here we have Banana Cream Pie, *Durian* Cheesecake and Mango Flan. These no-bake recipes are easy to do and, at the same time, perfect for those who do not have an oven but love to prepare desserts.

Black-bottom Banana Cream Pie

Crust:
1 1/3 c crushed Marie biscuits
¼ c white sugar
½ c melted butter
Black-bottom layer:
180 g or 6 ounces semi-sweet chocolate
2 tbsp all-purpose cream
Banana cream filling:
1 tbsp unflavored gelatin dispersed in ½ c fresh milk
4 egg yolks
¾ c white sugar
¼ c cornstarch
2 ½ c fresh milk
1 tbsp butter
¼ tsp pure vanilla extract
2 cups sliced bananas

Line the bottom and sides of a pie plate with foil. Set aside.

To prepare the crust, combine the crushed biscuits, sugar and melted butter together in a mixing bowl. Transfer the mixture to the prepared pie plate. Using the back of a spoon, press the mixture against the bottom and sides of the prepared pie plate, forming a shell. Set aside.

In a small saucepan, combine the chocolate and the cream. Place over low heat and stir continuously until the chocolate is almost melted. Remove from heat and continue stirring until the chocolate has melted completely. Pour this mixture over the crust and spread with a metal spatula to cover the bottom completely. Set aside.

To prepare the banana cream filling, allow the gelatin to soak in ½ cup milk for at least five minutes. Combine yolks, sugar, cornstarch, remaining milk and gelatin solution in a thick saucepan. Beat with a wire whip to blend. Place over medium or low heat and cook, stirring continuously, until mixture thickens and coats the back of a spoon. Turn off the heat and stir in the butter and vanilla. Set aside to cool completely.

When the custard has cooled down, stir in two cups sliced bananas. Mix well and transfer to the pie plate with the chocolate layer. Spread with a spatula to level. Keep chilled.

Note: Semi-sweet baking chocolate can be found in the flour section of large supermarkets.

Durian Cheesecake

Crust:
1 c + 2 tbsp crushed Graham crackers
½ c melted butter
Cheesecake:
1½ tbsp unflavored gelatin
1/3 c water
1½ c or bars cream cheese
1½ c all-purpose cream
½ c bottled *durian* jam
Topping:
Durian jam

Line a nine-inch removable bottom pan or pie plate with a sheet of foil. Set aside.

In a medium-sized bowl, combine crushed Graham crackers and melted butter. Transfer to the prepared baking pan. Using the back of a spoon, press the mixture against the bottom of the pan forming a solid bottom layer. Set aside.

In a thick saucepan, combine gelatin and water. Mix well and allow the gelatin to bloom. Place over low heat and stir continuously until the mixture becomes clear. Do not allow to boil. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl and using an electric mixer, beat cream cheese until light. Add cream and continue to beat until blended. Pour in the gelatin solution and beat until well incorporated. Pour in the *durian* jam and continue to beat until well dispersed.

Pour the cheesecake mixture into the prepared baking pan previously lined with the prepared crust. Chill or freeze until firm.

Unmold the cheesecake, spread an adequate amount of *durian* jam on the surface and slice into wedges.

Mango Flan

2 tbsp unflavored gelatin
1¼ c bottled (pasteurized) mango juice
1/3 c white sugar
1¾ c all-purpose cream
¼ tsp mango extract (optional)
2 pcs ripe mangoes, peeled and sliced into chunks

Disperse the gelatin in mango juice. Mix well and let stand for three minutes to allow the gelatin granules to swell. Transfer the mixture to a large saucepan. Pour in the sugar, cream and mango extract. Cook over the lowest possible heat until the gelatin dissolves completely taking care that the mixture does not boil. Divide among ramekins or plastic ice cream cups (approximately 10 pieces). Top with mangoes and chill until firm. Serve cold.

Dorothy MJ Ferreria offers cooking, baking and cake-decorating classes at Dorothy's Cooking School in Quezon City and in key provincial cities. For classes in Subic next week, call (047) 2525040. For Manila classes, call 7217735 or e-mail dorothyferreria@skyinet.net

Unhappy air-con owners

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

YOU could throw away a defective flashlight because the cost of getting it fixed would probably cost almost as much as a new one. But you cannot do that with a washing machine, a television set, a computer or an air-conditioner.

Unfortunately, having appliances repaired these days is a capital headache. And looking for a satisfactory repair shop is a frustrating quest. If you know of one, don't hesitate to tell us about it. We have several readers asking us to recommend good repair shops, particularly for computers.

Here's a typical scenario related to us by the owner of a two-year-old Carrier air-conditioning unit. We shall call her Lindab after her e-mail address lindab@wave .com.ph:

Lindab's litany of woes began March 2 when the repairman assigned to fix her air-conditioner arrived three hours late despite her constant reminders to customer care about the schedule she requested. At the risk of compromising her other appointments, she waited until the repairman found out what was wrong with the unit. The timer wasn't working and had to be changed. Replacement service was set for March 6 before 11 a.m.

The technician failed to come as scheduled. When Lindab called customer care service to complain, she was informed that the supplier sent the wrong replacement part for her unit. They were still waiting for the right part and would call her once it was available. The temporary schedule for repair was set for next week... hopefully.

We called the customer care service of Concepcion-Carrier the other day to find out why their technicians fail to come on schedule and why customers are not advised. We got the following explanation from a very apologetic member of the staff:

"When our technicians fail to come on time, it's because their schedules are fully loaded every day. We are deeply sorry we couldn't inform our customer that the technician could not come last March 6 because we were getting too many calls that day. *Sunod-sunod po*."

Patrick Concepcion of Concepcion Industries, who got a copy of Lindab's e-mail, promised to look into the problem.

Actually, the very same thing happened to Mr. and Ms Francisco Raquel (f.d.raquel @digiteltone.com) sometime last year. He sent a text message to the customer service office of the air-con manufacturer (0918-9175555) requesting to have their unit cleaned. Right away, he was given the job order number and date of service. To confirm the schedule, his wife called the center (8635555) and was reassured that the technician would arrive.

"By 10:20 a.m., no technician had come. I called and was reassured. 'Just wait for them, please,' the customer service operator said. No one came by 2 p.m. I canceled all my appointments that day to be around. They finally arrived at 5:15 p.m."

Fed up, he sent the following text message to customer care: "Do not commit when you cannot provide."

That reminds us of the JVC 29-inch flatscreen TV (P29,990) that Antonio Llamas complained about a few months ago. After barely a week of use, the unit was found to have a problem with the picture. Llamas requested for a replacement but the JVC people only wanted to replace the memory chip.

When we talked to a JVC technician, we were told "it depends on the management if they would allow a replacement of the television unit. *Pwede namang ma*-repair."

Where to complain

There's a section in the Consumer Act of the Philippines that specifies that the Department of Trade and Industry is in charge of regulating repair and service firms in the country. In fact, all these firms have to be accredited by DTI before they can go into business.

Accordingly, "No person shall operate a repair and service firm, or act as technical personnel therein without first being accredited by the department." In addition to that, the DTI is empowered to suspend, revoke or cancel the certificate of accreditation in case of violation, after "due notice and hearing."

For more information, call Yolanda Marquina at the consumer welfare desk of the Bureau of Trade Regulation and Consumer Protection at 8904932 or write to BTRCP, 2/F Trade and Industry Bldg., 261 Gen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City.

Private cars with siren

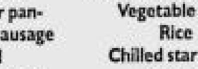
A reader wanted to know where to complain about private cars using police siren. He wrote, "Some private cars are using police siren, just like a black Ford Expedition that blew the shrill horn to tell a driver blocking his path that he wanted to overtake the other vehicle. Where do I report this?"

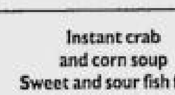
We asked the Land Transportation Office and was advised to call the LTO Flying Squad. It is the law enforcement arm of LTO and handles complaints and reports of violations of traffic policy.

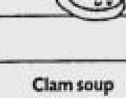
The numbers are 9206308 and 9215821. By the way, the LTO trunkline is 9229061 (up to 66).

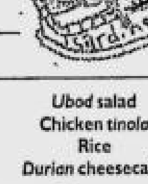
Send consumer complaints and comments to giron@mailstation.net

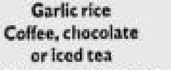
	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
MONDAY	*Ensaymada* or *mamon* Pan-grilled sweet ham or slices of Chinese ham Coffee, chocolate or iced tea Ripe mangoes with cottage cheese	Clear soup Pork steak with onion rings Vegetable chopsuey Rice *Mais con hielo*	*Pancit sotanghon guisado* Fried chicken wings Black-bottom banana cream pie
TUESDAY	Scrambled eggs with diced potatoes Vienna sausage or pan-grilled Hungarian sausage Sliced bread Butter, sandwich spread Coffee, chocolate or carrot juice	Chicken teriyaki with pineapple chunks Vegetable *okoy* Rice Chilled star apple (*caimito*)	Instant crab and corn soup Sweet and sour fish fillet with bell pepper and carrots Fried *bihon* or plain rice Canned lychee with crushed ice
WEDNESDAY	Oatmeal with sliced bananas, raisins and cinnamon Whole-wheat bread Margarine, fruit jam, Spanish sardines Cheddar cheese Coffee or iced tea	Beef *nilaga* with *camote*, *pechay* and *saba* Eggplant salad Rice Fresh fruit salad	Caesar salad Simplified paella Brazo de mercedes
THURSDAY	Soft-boiled eggs Chicken sandwich spread Bread Coffee, chocolate or pineapple juice	Clam soup Fried pork chops Boiled asparagus with oyster sauce topping Rice Papaya shake	*Ubod* salad Chicken *tinola* Rice *Durian* cheesecake
FRIDAY	Fried *danggit* Garlic rice Coffee, chocolate or iced tea Bananas with cottage cheese	*Sinigang na bangus* with kangkong and *labanos* Rice Chico salad with cream and sago	Vegetable lasagna Garlic bread Mango flan
SATURDAY	*Tapa* Sliced tomatoes Fried rice Coffee, chocolate or mango juice	Store bought sashimi Assorted tempura Rice Green tea ice cream	Roast chicken Baked potatoes with sour cream topping Chocolate cake
SUNDAY	Chinese congee (*lugaw*) Crispy *adobo* flakes Ginger brew (*salabat*) or hot tea Fresh fruit platter	Green mango salad *Tahong* soup *Inihaw na isda* Rice Fresh fruit platter	Pastel de lengua Rice Leche flan

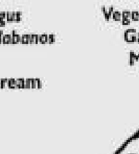


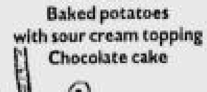


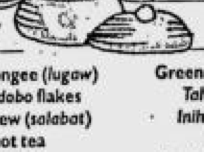


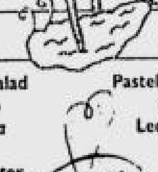






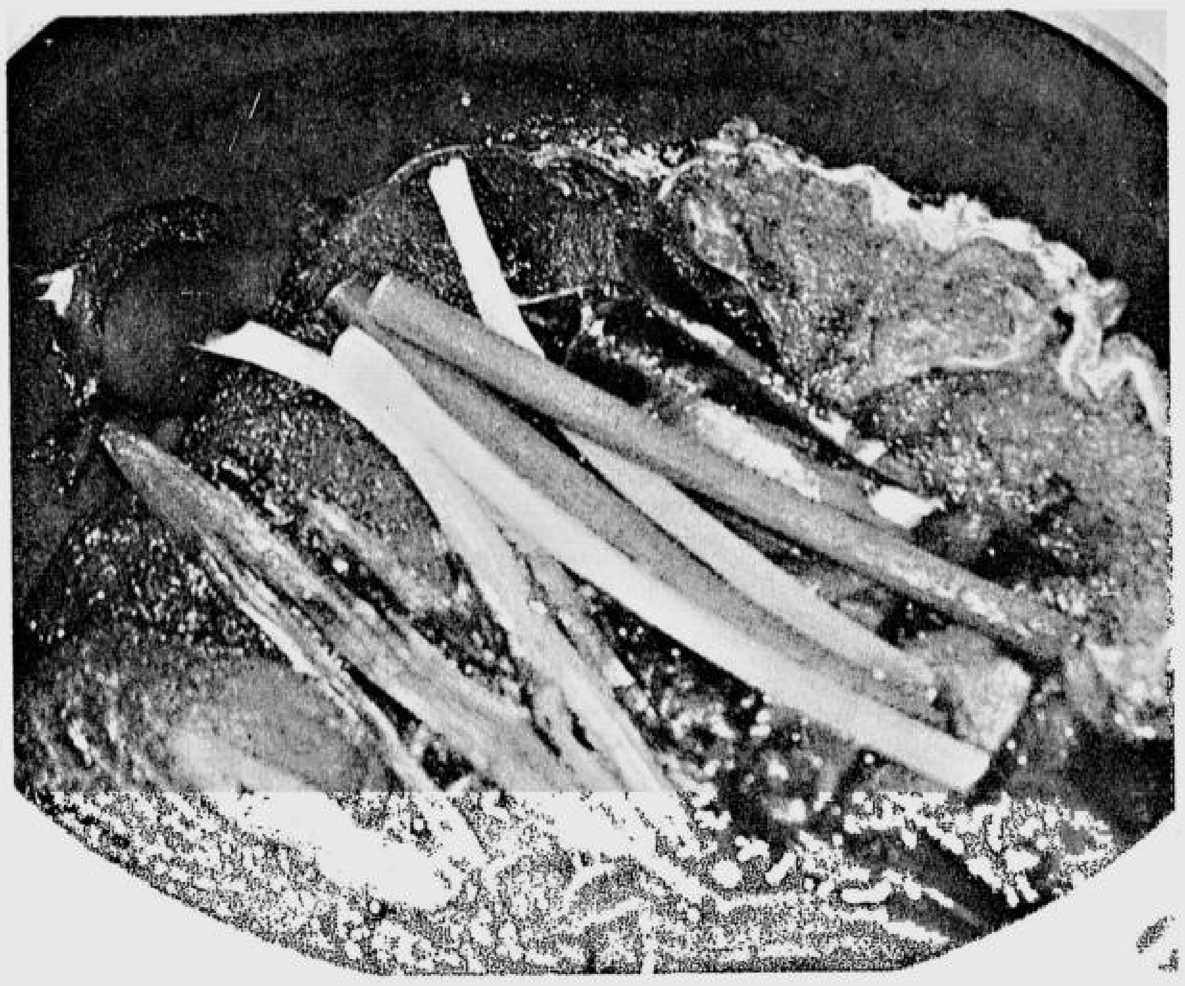






FRESH Roll

Something old, something borrowed in Vietnamese cooking



MEKONG Fish in Pot

Text by Rowena C. Burgos
Photos by Rudy Esperas

POLITICAL upheaval, ironically, can leave a bright legacy particularly in the kitchen. Out of Vietnam's long history of foreign rule—by the Chinese and, later, the French—emerged an exciting multicultural cuisine.

Cooking techniques from those world-class cuisine and others that the country had been exposed, when applied to Vietnam's tropical bounty created a palette of flavors and textures.

The Vietnamese learned from China the use of chopsticks and stir-fry; from Mongolia, the incorporation of beef; and from nearly a century of French colonial rule, a lasting love for butter, breads and coffee. But, throughout all this, Vietnamese food also managed to retain its own character.

With its emphasis on fresh ingredients and minimal use of fat in cooking, Vietnamese cuisine has earned a reputation for being healthful. And while the Vietnamese do not shy away from meat, they use beef, chicken, pork and seafood only in small, flavorful amounts.

"Vietnamese cuisine features wheat and legumes, herbs and vegetables, minimal use of oil, and with the treatment of meat as condiment rather than main course, Vietnamese food proves to be healthy," says Alex Hua, general manager of Saigon Best.

Hua, a Chinese-Vietnamese, adds that the cuisine's robust flavor combined with plenty of herbs and greens satisfies demands for stronger tastes and healthful ingredients. Rice plays an essential role in Vietnam's diet as it does in other Southeast Asian countries.

"But this is also a noodle-crazy population, regularly taking them for breakfast, lunch and dinner, in homes, restaurants and at roadside stands. Noodles are eaten with soup or without and are (available) in different shapes," Hua says.

LUISA Ronquillo, restaurant manager, and Alex Hua, general manager

Delightful offerings

Saigon Best opened in 2002 as a 45-seater sandwich bar on Matalino St., Diliman, Quezon City (behind City Hall). A few months later, a 110-seater Saigon Best (tel. 3724143) was put up on Tomas Morato corner Scout Lozano St., Quezon City.

Open daily from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., the restaurant serves sandwiches, appetizers (Fried Spring Roll, Fresh Roll, Shrimp Bread, Chicken and Seafood Salads), vermicelli (Beef Lemongrass, Pork and Roll, Chicken BBQ), noodles (Beef Ball Noodle, Chicken Noodle, Pork Noodle, Shrimp Noodle), rice toppings, desserts (Che Dau) and house specialties (Mekong Fish in Pot, Fried Crispy Chili Prawns, Fried Catfish with Ginger Sauce, Seafood Rice in Pot, Seafood Noodle Soup, Crab with Garlic).

Saigon Best also offers package meals at P480 for two persons and P880 for four persons.

The menu includes Spring Roll, Fresh Roll, Canh Thap Cam soup, Vietnamese Fried Rice, Kangkong Garlic, Chicken BBQ, Beef in Olive Oil, Breaded Shrimp, Sweet and Sour Pork, Che Dau, Ice Cream and Bottomless Iced Tea.

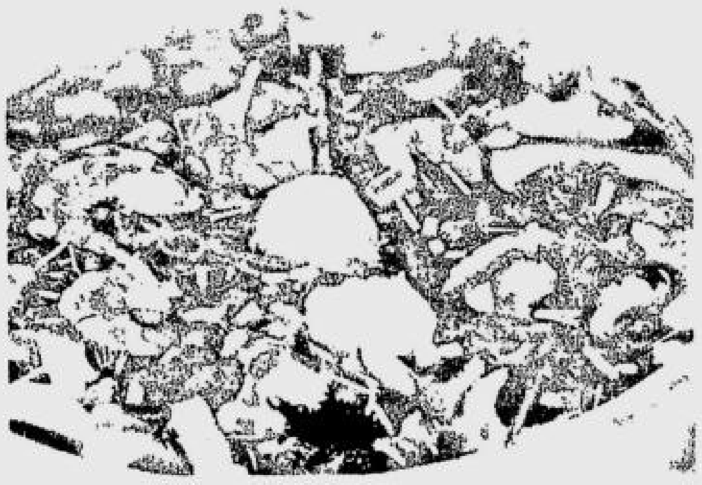
Simple yet flavorful

On the surface, Hua says, a noodle dish appears to be a simple combination of rice noodles, broth and sliced meat. "But, the dish's quality changes depending on the flavor and clarity of the broth, cut of noodles, preparation of meat additions and freshness of garnishes," he says.

A typical spring roll may seem bland—a combination of thin rice vermicelli noodles, unseasoned shrimp, carrot, lettuce leaves and bean sprouts wrapped in rice paper. "But you shouldn't eat it without dipping it in fish sauce (*nouc cham*) to bring the flavors to life," Hua says.

Such distinctive combinations may seem exotic to the Filipino palate. A visit to Saigon Best offers a perfect introduction to a distinctive cuisine.

E-mail the author at rburgos@inquirer.com.ph



SEAFOOD Noodle Soup

SPRING Roll Vermicelli

BARBEQUE Chicken with Papaya Salad and Sticky Rice (P199)

Thai noodles and desserts

THIS GRADUATION season, Oody's Rice, Noodles 'n Bar, the home of authentic and affordable Thai cuisine, is offering a treat to new graduates and their families.

Diners in groups of four accompanied by at least one graduate will each be entitled to a free dessert treat. Just present a valid school ID, and dessert is on the way. This promo runs March 15-April 15.

Oody's specialties include Sukhothai Soup, Fried Spaghetti with Clams and Chili Paste, Fried Spaghetti with Salted Fish and Thai Rice Noodles Dried Small with Chicken Drumstick Soup.

Other must-haves are the Thai Rice Noodles Big with Red Seasoning Sauce Soup, Stir Fried Thai Rice Noodles Big with Chicken and Fried Thai Noodles Small with Shrimp Thai Style (Pad Thai).

For appetizers, savor the taste of Vietnamese fresh Spring Rolls or Fried Shrimp Wanton.

To go with a glass of cold beer, Oody's recommends the Spicy Egg Noodle Salad with Minced Pork and Seafood, or the Spicy Rice Noodles Salad with Roasted Rice Minced Chicken.

Rice dishes include Fried Rice w/ Shrimp paste in Omellete, Barbecue Chicken with Papaya Salad and Sticky Rice, and Fried Rice with Seafoods and Yellow Curry.

Oody's branches are located at Greenbelt 3 (7574258 or 7574259), Robinson's Galleria (6365497 or 636-5498), Tomas Morato, QC (9201528 or 9203871) and Robinson's Ermita.

THAI Rice Big with Red Seasoning Sauce Soup (P139)

Chinese resto offers new a la carte dishes

DINING OUT

LUK YUEN Greenhills recently added new a la carte dishes such as Peppercorn Spareribs, Boneless Lemon Chicken, Stir Fried Beef with Kangkong and Bagoong, Fish Fillet in Sweet and Sour Sauce and Stir Fried Shrimps with Cashew and Green Peas. The dishes are good for two persons. Aside from expanding their food choices, the resto has installed a Micros-Fidelio point-of-sales system to further speed up their service. Food is served hot and fresh in just a few minutes." Luk Yuen has branches in Glorietta II Ayala Center Makati, Cash & Carry, SM Megamall, Alabang Town Center and Gateway Magallanes.

EDSA Shangri-La's Nishiki presents the Art of Sushi today until March 19. Chef Satoru of Nishimura Hong Kong prepares Japanese Spring Onion, Roasted Salmon, Grilled Japanese Scallop, Butter-grilled Japanese Oyster, Prime Tuna Belly and Sweet Shrimp, White Bait Fish, Soft Shell Crab Sushi and Shark's Fin Sushi. Call 6338888.

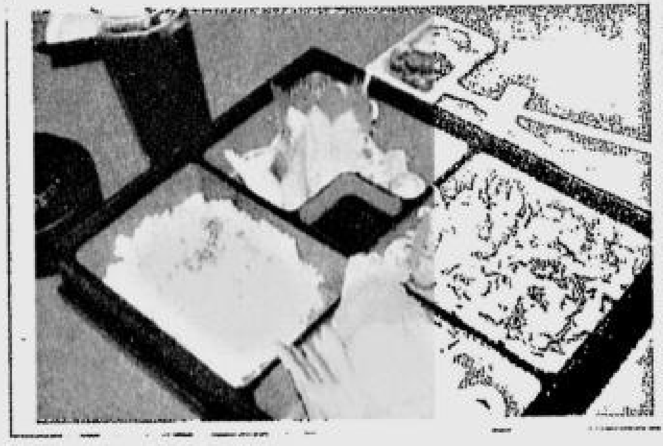
MANILA Pavilion Hotel offers various types of rice and noodles like Mong Khok, Tsim Sha Choy, Wan Chai, Shau Khe Wan, Yao Ma Tei, Sha Tien and Chong Wan. Available until March 14 at the Pavilion Court.

SHANGHAI Bistro features the best of Shanghai and Hong Kong cuisine. Its dishes include Drunken Chicken, Crystal Pork, Stir-fried Eel with Shredded Vegetables, Stewed Bamboo Shoots with Black Mushrooms, Seafood Soup with Bean Curd and Milk Fish Soup with Preserved Vegetables. Shanghai Bistro is located at Building A, Eastwood City Walk II.

SWAGAT Indian Cuisine offers Dal (lentil soup) with Roti (wheat bread with dip), Biryani (spicy rice) with variants of chicken, goat meat, scrambled egg and chicken and lamb cooked in herbs and spices, Palak Mutter (spinach with green peas cooked in herbs and spices), Gulab Jamun (cheeseball dipped in syrup), Dahiwada (lentil balls dipped in yogurt and spice) and Culfi (Indian ice cream), among others. Swagat is located at 119 FCC Building, Rada St., Legaspi Village, Makati. Call 7525669/ 0916-5524230.

JUMBO Japs Express opens at the ground floor of the Annex building in SM City North Edsa. The menu includes a selection of rice plates like the Sizzling Chicken Plate and Prawn Tempura Plate for only P99. This comes with two scoops of rice and mixed vegetables. Also available for P79 are rice bowls with a variety of toppings such as Squid Ring, Chicken Teriyaki, Chicken Teppanyaki, Beef and Pork. All sizzling and regular plates come with double rice.

PINOYDON will open its second home at the 3rd level of Eastwood Cybermall, Libis, QC. Its menu includes Tinapa Maki, Kani Ensalada, Bistekdon, Bangus Belly Katsu, Aligue Yakisoba and Banana Surprise.



SULO Hotel's Sushi Bar offers the Sushi Express Lunch for only P178 per meal complete with softdrinks or iced tea. Available from Monday to Friday, the Express Lunch menu includes appetizer, dessert, soup and rice along with the Japanese main course of your choice. Sulo Hotel is located on Matalino Road, Diliman, QC. Call 9245051 to 71.

ADD parsley until the onion is wilted. Cover and continue cooking over a low flame for about 30 minutes. Do not allow the onions to get brown.

PASS the onion mixture to a food processor or blender. Add the sweet peppers and egg yolk. Blend until smooth.

POUR slowly the hot water on the blend.

Viva Bacalao!

This classic Iberian dish will make those meatless days of Lent less mortifying and a bit sinful

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio

SINCE it's the season of Lent, it's back to meatless Fridays and a menu where fish gets star billing. Here's an all-time favorite fish dish to tide you over those days of mortification.

Bacalao a la Vizcaina is the traditional Spanish-Portuguese Good Friday dish of dried salted codfish cooked with olive oil, garlic, onions, tomatoes, pimientos and sometimes olives. Others add garbanzos and potatoes for more filling.

Since codfish is expensive in the Philippines—about P680 per kilo—dried local fish like *daing na labahita* or *tanigue* is often used as substitutes.

"But if you want a traditional Spanish dish, it's best to use bacalao," says Marilen Lopez, owner of the Spanish restaurant El Comedor in Greenbelt 1 (tel. 8925071). Bacalao meat is often white, lean and firm.

"The dried salt cod is actually the main ingredient for innumerable well-known Basque specialties. It is considered one of the supreme dishes of Basque cookery, greatly appreciated by those who have a taste for cod," says Lopez, who is running a bacalao festival until April 11 at El Comedor.

Bacalao is readily available at the deli Santi's. It is usually bought in the form of salt-dried fillets and therefore must be soaked in water for a couple of days before cooking.

Lopez suggests setting aside at least one day to prepare, debone and skin the bacalao. It's important to soak the bacalao for several hours, changing the water occasionally. The soaking softens the flesh and each water change reduces the salt.

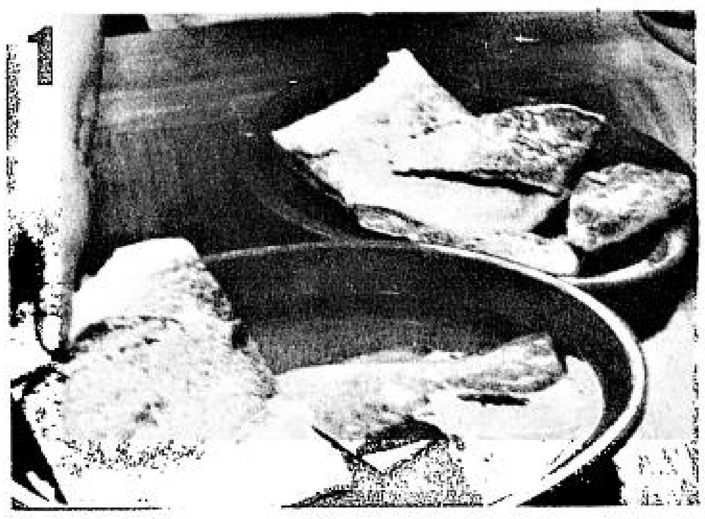
Connoisseurs swear that Bacalao a la Vizcaina gets more delicious with every reheating.

Ingredients

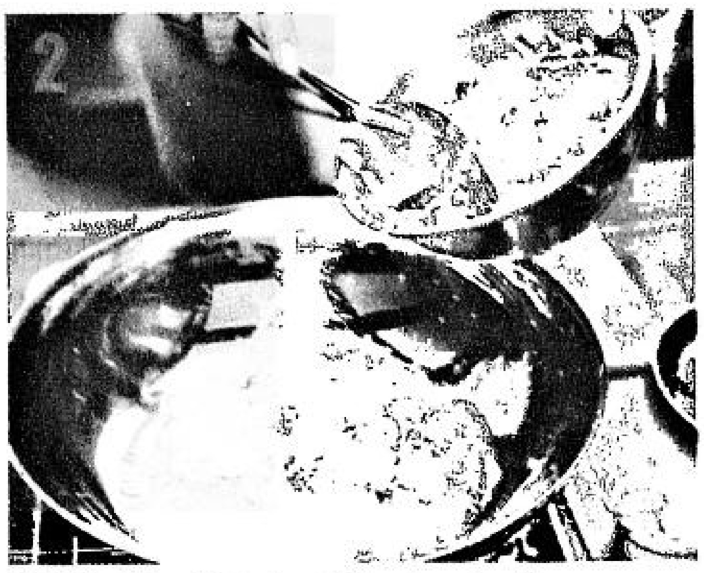
1 lb dried salt cod, boned and skinned
4 dried sweet red peppers, seeds and stems removed, cut lengthwise
3 tbsp olive oil
1½ c hot water
1 bay leaf
3 large onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, lightly crushed
2 sprigs parsley
1 hard-boiled egg yolk
½ dried red chili peppers, seeds removed, crumbled
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
green olives

E-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

STEP BY STEP

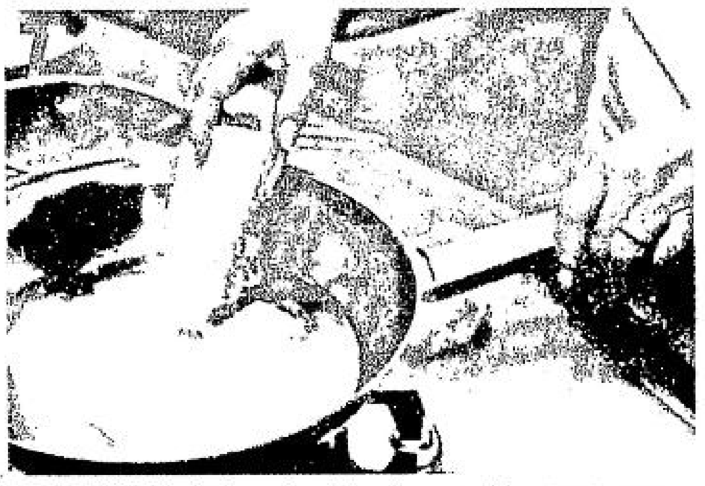


SOAK the cod in cold water for 36 hours, changing the water occasionally. In a separate bowl, soak the dried sweet peppers for one hour in warm water. Drain.



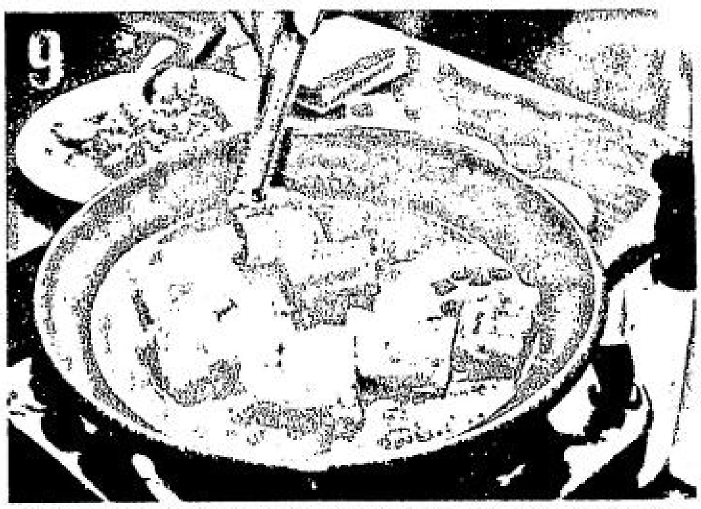
HEAT the oil in a skillet and sauté the onion and garlic.

STRAIN and return the onion mixture to the skillet, along with the bay leaf, salt, peppers and crumbled chili pepper. Cover and cook slowly for 20 minutes.

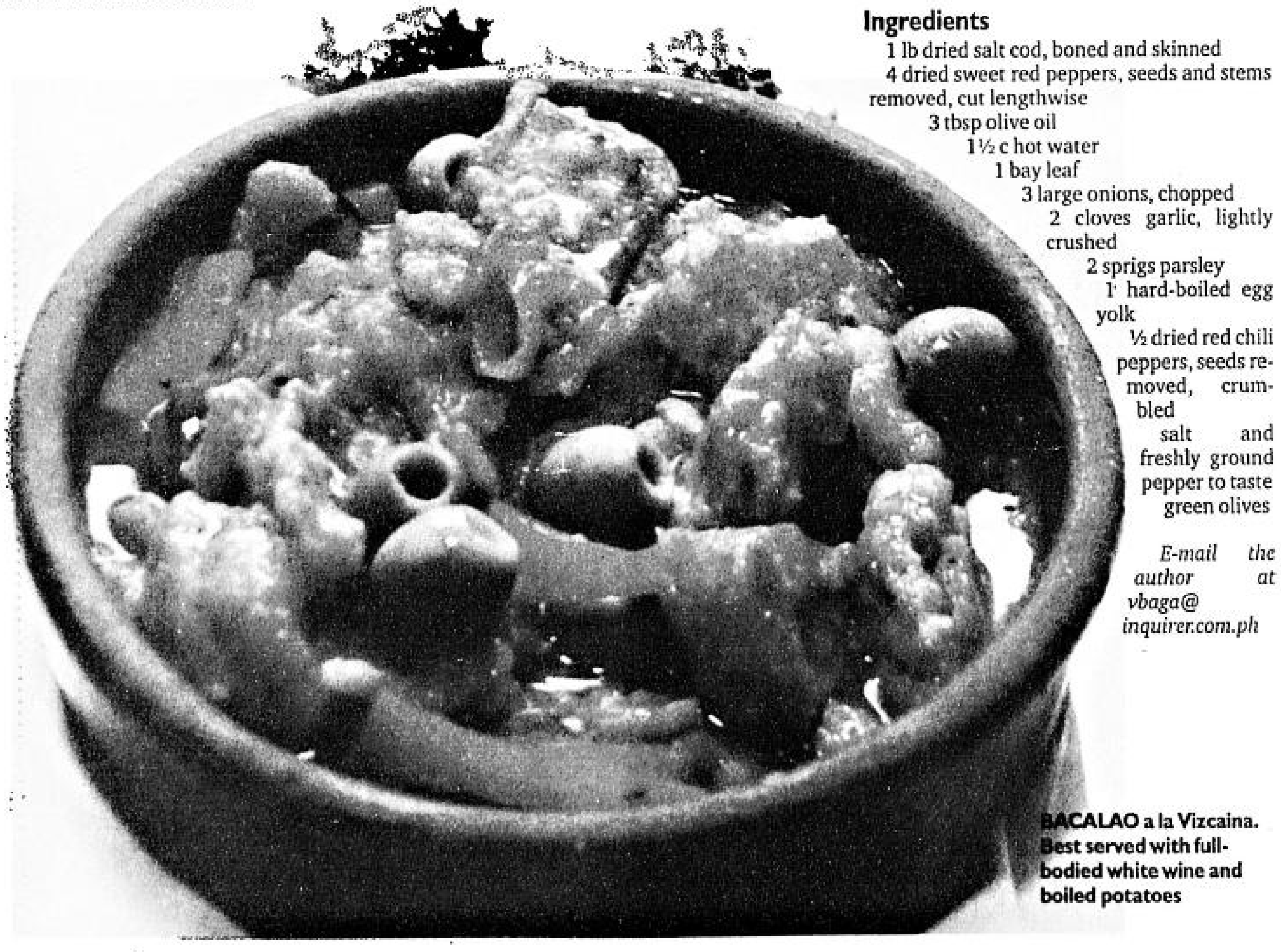


MEANWHILE, drain the cod and place in a pot with water to cover. Bring to a boil and remove immediately from the flame. Drain.

CUT cod into 1½ inch pieces.



IN a shallow ovenproof casserole (preferably earthenware), spread a few tablespoons of the onion mixture. Add the cod and cover with the remaining sauce. Place in a 300°F oven, uncovered, and cook until tender for about 1½ hours. Add a liter of water if the sauce dries out too much. Add the green olives.



BACALAO a la Vizcaina. Best served with full-bodied white wine and boiled potatoes

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Best of Asia classes

LEARN to cook authentic Asian dishes as San Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center brings you "The Best of Asia." The series starts off with A Taste of Malaysia featuring chef Ojie Reloj, who will share his recipes of Hainanese Chicken, Beef Rendiang, Roti (flat bread) on March 23, 1:30-4:30 p.m. at the San Miguel Culinary Center, Legaspi corner Eagle Sts., Barrio Ugong, Pasig. Participants have to pay a minimum fee of P500 (inclusive of snacks).

Call 6719876 locals 2771, 402, 404 and 405.

Largest food expo opens April in Singapore

THE 14TH FHA2004 (Food and Hotel Asia 2004) will be held April 20-23 at the 65,000-square meter Singapore Expo, one of Asia's largest exhibition centers.

Reputed to be the largest and most international food and hospitality industry event in Asia, FHA2004 showcases seven specialized shows—FoodAsia, HotelAsia, Wine and Spirits Asia, Hospitality Technology, Bakery Asia, Hospitality Style Asia and the FHA Culinary Challenge.

Spotlight will be on Chinese cuisine for the first time in the inaugural FHA Imperial Challenge to be held simultaneously. The competition will showcase the skills of professional chefs from all around the world, who will interpret authentic Chinese cuisine.

The Tea and Coffee Trail will feature prominent exhibitors including Boncafé International, Bravilor Bonamant, Coffex Coffee, Super Coffemix East, West International, Kaffa Kaldi, Nestlé, UCC Ueshima Coffee and Unilever Bestfoods.

Wine and Spirit 2007 will bring together prominent market leaders such as Freixenet, J Portugal Ramos Viinhos, Makoto-Ya, PCCW (H.K.) Wine and Spirits, and Wein Gut Simnoshof. FHA2004 will also see the return of the Wine and Spirits Asia Challenge, that will choose the finest wines in the world.

Hotel Asia 2004 features catering, food service equipment, storage systems, and hospitality management systems.

It incorporates Bakery Asia 2004, which features bakery ingredients, supplies and technologies for the bakery and confectionery industry.

Hospitality Style Asia 2004 is expected to draw manufacturers and suppliers of interior furnishings and tabletop products as well as interior designers, architects and key decision makers in the hospitality industry.

FHA2004 also includes industry-related conferences and seminars on how to face challenges in the food and hospitality industry.